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FIFTY YEARS IN A CHANGING WORLD

by

SIR VALENTINE CHIROL

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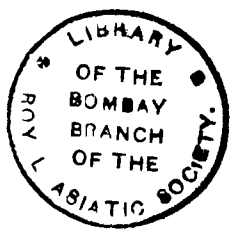

LONDON

Jonathan Cape 30 Bedford Square

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MCMXXVII
MADE & PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY BUTLER & TANNER LTD
FROME AND
LONDON

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INTRODUCTORY

This is not an autobiography. There are few people whose lives are of sufficient importance to be worth putting under the microscope, and I have certainly no claim to be numbered amongst those few. If I have been induced to place some chapters of my life on record which circumstances have perhaps invested with a wider and more permanent interest, it is because I have lived in a period of immense and immensely rapid changes all over the world, and have happened during that period to see a good deal of history in the making, and to have been brought into personal and often intimate contact with a good many of those who were making it. In Europe I witnessed as a boy the triumphant entry of the German armies into Paris in 1871, and for many years before the Great War I had occasion to watch the Kaiser blindly steering his *Neuer Kurs* towards the catastrophe which shattered the German Empire and plunged the greater part of Europe into ruin. In all that used to be called the 'unchanging' East I have had greater opportunities than are given to most of observing the growth, sometimes almost from their birth, of the new and incalculable forces which, though evolved under the masterful impact of the West, are already challenging the white man's claim to the appointed overlordship of the coloured races of the earth. These are the momentous changes, greater from many points of view than any that have taken place within a like period in the history of mankind, which I have endeavoured to illustrate out of my own experiences, and as the continuity of history is one of the chief lessons which they have taught me, I have sorted them out into separate groups that tell their consecutive story in connection with each of the different countries to which they relate, instead of attempting to follow the strict chronology of my own years which would have been irrelevant to my chief purpose, and might have merely perplexed the reader.

INTRODUCTORY

Generations come and generations go, but to-day is, for better and for worse, the heir of yesterday, and I who belong to a generation that is fast passing away, should like to think that a few of those that come after me may find something they can usefully glean from the memories of a long life already stretched a good deal beyond the allotted span of three-score years and ten.

FIFTY YEARS IN A CHANGING WORLD

CHAPTER I

THE PARIS COMMUNE, 1871

It was as a mere boy that I was for the first time brought into sharp contact with history in the making, and it happened on the Butte Montmartre in Paris on March 18, 1871, the first day of the Red Commune, where I saw it baptized with the blood of its earliest victims.

The merest chance took me there, but as it arose out of the circumstances of my childhood which, directly or indirectly, went far to determine the interests and shape the course of my whole life – and a man's life is, I am convinced, mainly the result of inherited qualities and early surroundings – it may be well for me to begin with a few words about myself which will enable me to dispense later on with personal explanations foreign to the purpose of these pages. Born in 1852, I am on my father's side of French Huguenot descent. Driven out of France by the Revocation of the Édit de Nantes, my paternal forbears lived in Geneva until the wars of the French Revolution drove them out of Switzerland. They then settled in England and became for the first two generations pastors of a French Protestant Church in London. My mother's family, on the other hand, is of English and even of Anglo-Saxon descent, Nesbit describing the Ashburnhams as having been 'of good account in England before the Conquest,' and many of her Sussex kinsfolk of that name are still living in the neighbourhood of Battle. On both sides I have family connections, though remote, in Germany and in Italy. It is, however, probably my foreign education that did more to form my character and mind than any strain of foreign blood still lingering in my veins. I was brought up chiefly in France and Germany, and though I always spoke English at home I learnt to speak French and German as fluently and to know those languages as thoroughly as my mother tongue, and to-day I still sometimes think and even more frequently dream in

them. Less enduring than the influence of the foreign environment was that of the creed in which I was brought up. Both my parents joined the Catholic Church during a visit to Rome shortly after their marriage, and whereas my father, who had been an English clergyman and had taken an active part in the Tractarian movement, reverted a few years later to the Church of England, my mother, with whom I lived as a child, remained a pious Catholic, but with a broad-minded and charitable spirit of Christian tolerance, too rarely found amongst converts, which her great affection extended to me throughout her long and gentle life, although when I grew up I was unable to share the convictions which to her were an unfailing source of spiritual comfort.

But if the associations of my childhood were in many respects un-English, I was not the less proud of being English, and I had my full share of the English boy's pugnacity, and perhaps a keener sense of humour than most. In this connection I may quote one little incident of which the recollection still sometimes affords me amusement. I went up in 1869 to the Paris Sorbonne for the French Baccalauréat-ès Lettres, which, however high sounding, amounted to little more than a school-leaving examination in England. I was then seventeen years old and a mere slip of a boy, as I was still 5 inches short of the 5 feet 10 inches to which I ultimately grew. At my viva voce examination in history I was asked to describe the *Cent Jours*. I knew the subject fairly well, but it was the humour of it that at once struck me. Here was a board of elderly French professors, officially the servants of the Napoleonic Empire, asking me, an English boy, to tell them the story of the great Napoleon's return from Elba and final overthrow by British arms at Waterloo! Of course they did not know that I was English. Neither my name nor my tongue betrayed my nationality. I came up from a French Lycée, and if my hair was very red and my skin very fair and freckled, such features were not unknown, though rather uncommon, amongst French boys. But I was suddenly and

irresistibly moved to let them know. I gave a thoroughly detached narrative without identifying myself with either French or English, until, having described the Battle of Waterloo, I ended up by saying – and I can remember my proud words, worthy of *la rhétorique* of the top form in a *Lycée* – '*La glorieuse ténacité de nos troupes triompha à la fin de la fougue désesperée de la Vieille et de la Jeune Garde Napoleonienne et notre victoire fut complète et décisive.*' It was a bombshell. The old professors leant forward excitedly: '*Mais quoi? Mais comment? Mais vous êtes Anglais alors?*' It dawned upon me that I had been rather 'cheeky' and might suffer for it. But they were very good natured, and if they did not all see the joke, I won them round by telling them that though I was proud to be English, France was '*ma seconde patrie,*' which was perfectly true then, and has always remained so in spite of many temporary and sometimes acute disagreements with French policy.

The year after I had thus graduated in Paris, the Franco-Prussian War broke out and its vicissitudes stirred the whole world. I naturally followed it with intense interest, and all the more so as it very soon directly affected our home life. When the war began I was studying in Germany, but for several years before the war my mother had lived at Versailles and her house was so conveniently near to the Préfecture which served as a residence for the old King William during the siege of Paris that it was commandeered and occupied by the Prussians for over five months. Beyond that bare fact we knew little as to what had happened, and soon after the Armistice I prevailed on my mother to let me go over in default of any more suitable emissary to see how far our household chattels had survived the ordeal and to pack up such of them as could be despatched in due course to England, where she had decided to settle down again after many years of residence abroad. I saw the first Prussian *Pickelhaube* at Amiens and I reached Paris in time to see the German armies make their victorious entry on the 1st of March, 1871, under

the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde and bivouac for two days in the Champs Élysées as on a field of battle in the grimly silent solitude with which the vanquished capital encompassed them.

We had friends with whom I could stay either in Paris or in Versailles, and so it came about that on the fateful day of March 18 I was returning from the Gare du Nord in Paris, where I had been making inquiries about the still rather irregular services to London, when juvenile curiosity and love of adventure swept me into the centre of the storm that was about to break over the whole city. I was carried along from the Place Pigalle towards the heights of Montmartre with a dense crowd, some in uniforms, but mostly in blouses, with not a few wild-looking women amongst them, all streaming forward under Red flags to the irregular beat of drums or to a shrill chorus of Red revolutionary songs.

The tremendous self-restraint which Paris had imposed upon herself whilst *les Prussiens* were for a few hours within her walls was gone. The populace was ripe for revolt; the Garde Nationale, which the Capitulation had left intact, was already in almost open mutiny, and it was in possession of the guns on the Butte Montmartre that dominated the whole city. The Government, of which M. Thiers was the head, and, in spite of his great age, the one real driving power, realized that if the situation was to be saved, those guns had got to be removed, and the Federation of the Garde Nationale had placarded the streets with proclamations daring the Government to touch them. The disorderly remnants of a beaten army and an overwrought population demoralized by the hardships of a five months' siege which, towards the end, came nigh to starvation had been wrought up to a white heat of passion by the ravings of mob orators and hysterical journalists who had dinned every day into their ears that the Government had sold them to the Prussians. Just as those who made the revolution of September 4 imputed all the earlier disasters of the war solely to the sins of the Second Empire, so

those who prepared the way for the Commune imputed the capitulation of Paris solely to the treachery of the false Republicans who, having sold Paris to the Prussians, were now going to sell the Republic to the Royalists. Even during the siege Paris had more than once been on the point of breaking out into open rebellion. Now that the *infâme* Trochu had made way for the still more *infâme* Thiers, and only the Sacred Legion of National Guards stood between an 'indomitable people' and its betrayal to all the old tyrannies of Church and State, was Paris going tamely to hand over to a Government of traitors the guns of which even the Prussians had been afraid to demand the surrender?

Very soon it was much less my curiosity and spirit of adventure that carried me along than the physical pressure of a dense crowd from which there was no escape, and when after more than an hour's struggling and crushing we got to the Rue des Rosiers, which was, I heard on all sides, the appointed rendezvous, I found myself wedged in amongst a tumultuous mass of humanity that was already seeing 'red.' The singing of the *Carmagnole* and *Ça Ira* of the Terror alternated with shrill yells of '*A la Lanterne*,' '*Mort aux traîtres*,' and other hideous imprecations. Rifle shots suddenly rang out sharply from a house at the further end of the street. The two unfortunate Generals, Clement Thomas and Lecomte, who were to have carried out the removal of the guns, had been deserted by their troops and captured by the mob. The end had just come after a mock drum-head court-martial with a few shots fired by some of the Garde Nationale. A grim silence fell for a few moments on the frenzied crowd, and then a huge evil fellow close to me climbed up a lamp-post and waving his red flag over his head shouted in stentorian tones:' *Les traîtres viennent d'être fusillés! La justice du peuple est faite! A l'Hôtel de Ville! A l'Hôtel de Ville!*' The crowd at once took up the cry '*A l'Hôtel de Ville!*' which the Communists seized before night-fall, and the surging tide which had carried me up to within a few hundred yards of where

the two Generals were murdered, bore me down again towards the boulevards.

Once or twice I had been rather roughly handled by some excited patriot who suspected me, perhaps on the strength of my red hair, of being a spy; but I had lived long enough in or near Paris to pass muster as a real *gamin de Paris* who could answer him back in his own slang, and when on one occasion I was getting rather badly cornered a good-natured old *épicier* seized me by my coat-tail and made me take sanctuary for a few minutes amongst his dried herrings and molasses, upbraiding me the while good-humouredly, though with many forcible expletives, for a *'petit imbécile qui vas t'fourrer le nez dans un grabuge où t'n'as rien à voir.'* He was undoubtedly right, but the impulsiveness of youth does not stop to count the risks, and, after all, the risk was worth taking. Though I did not realize all that it meant at the time, I had seen the beginning of the Commune. The next day it was formally installed at the Hôtel de Ville as a Revolutionary Government, whilst M. Thiers and his Government and all its chief officials and the few regiments that had remained loyal retired to Versailles to save the rest of France and reorganize her national forces against which the revolted capital was to endure a second and more inglorious siege.

For more than two months Paris remained in the grip of the Commune. It aped the language and the methods of the great French Revolution. It revived the old revolutionary calendar. It had its Mountain and its Plain, its ranting clubs, which held their orgies chiefly in desecrated churches, its Central Committee and its Committee of Public Safety, its *Père Duchesne* and its *Cri du Peuple*, its *pétroleuses*, instead of *tricoleuses*, its secret proscription lists and, on a lesser scale, its cold-blooded massacres. But it was a squalid parody of the terrible drama of 1793. If its blood-guiltiness fell far short of that of the Terror, still more did it fall short of the Terror's sombre grandeur. In the midst of its most sanguinary excesses at home, the Terror knew at least how to organize victory on

the frontiers against a world in arms. The Commune fought against the French troops, whom Marshal MacMahon was reorganizing at Versailles, but it coquetted with the Prussians still encamped on the other side of Paris.

The names and the features of the Communist leaders have for the most part been long since forgotten. How grotesquely insignificant many of them were! Madmen like Amouroux, the hatter; Allix, a perfumer who had 'invented' explosives and a new 'fusionist' religion; disreputable fops like Billioray, a Post Impressionist 'before the letter'; Pascal Grousset, the *bel-ami* who tried to escape in his mistress's clothes; embittered workmen of all sorts, stonecutters, metal workers, coppersmiths and, above all, bootmakers; a few more or less honest dreamers, and doctrinaires such as Malon; the inevitable cosmopolitan fire-brands, Dombrowski, Razoua, La Cecilia; two or three Catilinarian *déclassés*, most conspicuous amongst them Cluseret, and then perhaps half a dozen individuals whose personality or whose crimes raise them out of the squalid ruck; Raoul Rigault, the anarchist dandy who seized the venerable Archbishop Darboy and ordered the firing of the Tuileries; Jules Vallès, the poet; Henri Rochefort, born a Marquis, who ran away and saved his vitriolic pen to serve many other scarcely less unworthy causes; Felix Pyat, who also escaped by timely flight the consequence of his odious campaign of delation in the Press; Delescluze, the hard, cold, implacable Jacobin who had modelled himself on the Sea-green Incorruptible of 1793, and perhaps alone of all the Jacobins of 1871 was capable of rising to the sinister heights of the Terror.

I was too young, perhaps, to form any judgment worth recording; but apart from its bloodstained episodes and its lurid finale, the impression left on my mind by the everyday life of the Commune was that of a pseudo-drama which was constantly being turned into a sordid burlesque by clumsy actors far too puny for the parts for which they had been cast. The Jacks-in-office of the Commune draped themselves in

broad red scarves, and the officers strutted about rattling their sabres, with plenty of gold braid on their uniforms and huge red plumes on their *képis*. But their war-like ardour found its chief vent in noisy oratory in cafés and clubs, where women figured often no less prominently. I slipped one evening into the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois just behind the Louvre. A drunken-looking 'patriot' presided over the proceedings from an armchair hoisted on to the high altar, whilst a painted Jezebel, waving a red flag in her hand, poured forth a flood of obscene blasphemy on *le ci-devant dieu des prêtres et ses infâmes soudards de Versailles*. This virago may well have been the Lodoiska Kaweska whom Vizetelly mentions in his graphic *Adventures under the Commune* as one of the chief ornaments of the *Club des Libres Penseurs* who made that church their headquarters. There were plenty of loud-mouthed *citoyens* and *citoyennes* to prate about *la vengeance du peuple qui gronde par la voix du canon*, but the dismal procession of ambulance carts from the front was not allowed to disturb their junketings in fashionable restaurants where Venus and Bacchus were more honoured than Mars. The common fry was left to do the fighting, and often fought bravely. But whilst the Commune was proclaiming their bogus victories over *ces monstres de Versailles*, the Communist forces, ill-equipped and worse led, were constantly losing ground.

As the struggle grew more desperate my expeditions from Versailles into the capital became less frequent and more difficult, for both sides exercised a sharper control over the coming and going of the most inoffensive non-combatants. My boyish looks and perhaps a rather precocious resourcefulness carried me through where my elders were generally held up, and my adventures acquired the added savour of forbidden fruit. My last successful one was on May 16, when I managed to get into Paris and edged my way through the dense crowds in the Rue de la Paix, and saw and heard and even felt the crash of the Colonne Vendôme, crowned with the

statue of Napoleon I, when the earth quaked once more with his downfall. How it made my young blood boil to see the Communist pigmies swarm on to the broken pedestal and fling their bombastic insults on the giant Cæsar whose statue, broken by the fall, lay prostrate at their feet! I was trying to get still closer when a tall Englishman with a long flowing beard, who was then quite unknown to me, but was to be the kindest of friends to me some years later, laid his hand upon my shoulder. 'Surely you're an English boy,' he said to me, looking me up and down quickly, and added rather gruffly but with a pleasant twinkle in his eye: 'This is no place for a young monkey like you, and the sooner you get out of it, the better.' I shall have more to say about Laurence Oliphant, but here I need only confess that his commanding voice and presence overawed me completely and I just shuffled off like a naughty schoolboy caught out of bounds. Things were really getting too hot in Paris. I narrowly escaped being locked up for the night by Communists who stopped me as a spy, and I only got back to Versailles the following day after a desperately long tramp by way of St. Denis and through the Prussian lines, where my knowledge of German got me, as on some previous occasions, out of further trouble.

But the end of the Commune was at hand. A few days later, on May 21, MacMahon's army at last forced its way into Paris, by the Porte St. Cloud. For a whole week the rank and file of the Communists, now at bay, fought with the courage of despair, whilst those of their leaders who were not already taking refuge in cowardly flight gave their last ferocious orders for the massacre of the hostages, mostly priests, in the prisons to which they had been for some weeks consigned, and for the firing of all the great public buildings which had been the glory of the French capital. *Faites flamber Finances*, the Ministry of Finance close to the Place de la Concorde, was the first of the ruthless orders issued by the moribund Commune to its organized brigades of *pétroleurs* and *pétroleuses*, and from the terrace of St. Germain, I saw, on the night of May 23,

the long line of conflagrations which stretched across the centre of Paris on both banks of the Seine, until with the collapse of the Pavillon de l'Horloge of the Tuileries a huge column of flame overleapt all the others and flaunted the red flag of the dying Commune over the whole sky. That is the ominous memory which the Red Flag still calls to my mind when now in my old age the Red Flag is borne aloft and its hymn sung by numbers of my own fellow countrymen who are for the most part, I hope and believe, largely unconscious of its bloodstained history and formidable implications.

I had witnessed the beginning and the end of a lurid chapter of history, and at a most impressionable age. That experience which at the time was little more to me than a thrilling adventure sowed the seeds that were to mature later on, of the chief interest to which the most fruitful portion of my life has been devoted, i.e. the study and writing of history as we see it in our own times constantly in the making, whether shaped by new aspirations or by ancient forces that have been slowly evolved through the centuries.

CHAPTER II

EGYPT BEFORE THE BRITISH OCCUPATION

It was in Egypt that in October, 1876, I first made acquaintance with the East. I had just left the Foreign Office, where I had spent four years – or perhaps, as I should now penitently admit, misspent them, though they were not altogether wasted, for they brought me a few lifelong friendships and gave me some insight into international affairs and the machinery of diplomacy that was to be very helpful to me afterwards.

My first day in Egypt remains for me a vision of delight and of bewilderment. The early loom of the land across the opal sea with palm trees scattered along the yellow sand dunes against an opal sky; the pandemonium of the landing at Alexandria in native boats with dusky, half-naked and yelling boatmen fighting for possession of one's body and one's luggage; the struggle through the Custom House amidst a swelling chorus of '*Bakshish*'; the heat and dust and flies of the crowded train to Cairo; but, from the windows, the spacious panorama of the Delta, over which the Nile had poured out its annual flood of fertilizing waters, not then fully controlled and husbanded by modern methods of scientific irrigation; the first glimpse of the Citadel and the Pyramids standing there so solid and real on the edge of a real desert, and not merely on the well-thumbed pages of my boyhood's picture-books; the renewed pandemonium of the Cairo railway station and the battling with the surging crowd of donkey-boys whose steeds then provided for all but the most favoured few the only means of locomotion in the Egyptian capital; the unaccustomed ride with a donkey-boy – 'My name Hassan' – shouting at my heels and prodding my animal through busy streets in which all was new to me; and then, past the Ezbekieh Gardens, the plunge into the twilight of the

narrow Muski, still unspoiled by later 'improvements,' where sedate old merchants were already putting up their wooden shutters and closing their shops for the night; and at last down a dark alley into the cool tiled courtyard of the Hôtel du Nil, a modern but unpretentious house built round a pleasant garden with the marble fountains and the palm trees that had probably been there when this was the old Christian quarter in the days of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt. In the evening I sat out in the fragrance and stillness of that sheltered garden, looking up for the first time through palm trees at a star-spangled firmament of a depth and brilliancy one never sees in Europe, and suddenly from an unseen minaret there fell for the first time on my ear the weird modulation of the Islamic call to prayer which goes forth five times a day from every mosque throughout all the Mohammedan lands of the earth. Further off and more faintly from all the other minarets the same cry re-echoed over the sleeping city and died away into the night. I had heard the East a-calling.

Though Egypt was already a great meeting house for East and West, it still wore only a thin veneer of civilization, and if the Khedive Ismail, who had been twelve years on the throne, postured sometimes as a mirror of Western enlightenment, he was still an Eastern despot, apt to revert suddenly to type. Contact with the West had made it easy for him to become the spendthrift of the age, for it was during his reign that the great expansion of industrial and economic wealth in Europe impelled the *haute finance* of London and Paris and Frankfort to look further and further afield for the profitable investment of rapidly accumulating capital. What more promising field than Egypt, which had waxed incredibly rich with its cotton and its sugar-cane during the American Civil War? What more desirable client than the magnificent ruler whose fame had been spread all over the world by the Thousand and One Nights' pageant of the opening of the Suez Canal? But even modern finance could not keep pace with

Ismail's extravagance, and still less could the resources, however bountiful, of an exiguous country with a population of barely five millions, keep pace with the growing burden of taxation required to meet the service of Egyptian loans launched in quickening succession and at increasingly usurious rates. The heavier the load of foreign indebtedness, the heavier the hand laid by Ismail on his helpless subjects *taillables et corvéables à merci.*

Perhaps if international financiers had been alone interested in the state of Egypt the Rake's Progress might have been allowed to proceed without let or hindrance. But Egypt bulked equally large in the field of international politics. For the Egyptian Question, which had been with us from the closing years of the eighteenth century, when the clash of French and English arms first opened up Egypt to Europe, had quite recently entered upon a new phase with Disraeli's purchase of the Khedive's Suez Canal shares – the only thing he had left to mortgage. Though this ultimately proved a brilliant operation for the British Exchequer, it was primarily a political demonstration, intended to remind all and sundry that Egypt was within the sphere of the British Empire's most vital interests. The shower of four million golden sovereigns poured into Ismail's bottomless purse evaporated, however, as quickly as raindrops falling on the thirsty desert, and when I landed in Egypt the crash was imminent. It had been already heralded by the suspension of payment of Egyptian treasury bills in the preceding April. The wretched *fellah* had been bled white and not a drop could be squeezed out of him. Ismail was a man of moods, easy-going and good-humoured when things were going well, but of an ungovernable temper when thwarted. He was at bay, and he saw red. His chief confidant and the chief instrument of his most ruthless extortions was his namesake and, some said, his foster-brother, Ismail Sadyk, better known as the Mufettish or Inspector, a term that covered extremely wide and varied duties, which he discharged to the Khedive's entire

satisfaction when in one year he squeezed £15,000,000 out of the Egyptian taxpayer whilst the whole officially recorded revenue only amounted to £10,000,000. He was the power behind the throne, and, many believed, above the throne. The state in which he lived vied with the Khedive's. He had half a dozen palaces in Cairo for himself and his various family establishments, including a vast *hareem*, and his antechambers were as crowded every day with clients and suppliants as the Khedivial Palace of Abdeen. He had immense estates all over the country, and great hoards of accumulated wealth, and, unlike the Khedive's, they were still unmortgaged. The temptation for Ismail to lay hands on them and on their owner was irresistible. Suddenly one day the city awoke to an astounding rumour that the all-powerful Mufettish had fallen and vanished into space. The people of Cairo thrilled partly with relief, partly with terror, but everywhere with bewildered amazement when the assurance came that on this occasion rumour had been no lying jade. In the early morning the Minister, omnipotent the day before, who had dined the previous night at his master's table and sat with him convivially till a late hour, had been pulled out of bed and conveyed – some whispered, though this for obvious reasons was untrue, by the Khedive himself – in a closed carriage of the Khedivial *hareem* down to the Nile and put on board the Khedivial yacht, which steamed at once full speed up the river. Some, who would have it that he was already dead when the carriage reached the river bank, remembered how about twenty years earlier, one of Ismail's predecessors on the throne, Abbas I, who was murdered by four of his favourite slaves in his Palace at Benha, was brought into Cairo on the following day as if he were still alive – a corpse, dressed and carefully propped up, sitting in an open carriage with a high officer of state facing it in the usual attitude of humble deference. Few at any rate now believe that the Mufettish ever left the steamer alive, though there is a story, not universally uncredited, that he was seen a good many

years later in the Sudan at Dongola, a prisoner in chains and the mere ghost of his former self. In any case, after November 26, 1876, Egypt knew him no more. He was gone. The Khedive seized all his palaces and estates and treasure, and his great establishments were scattered, and his hundreds of slaves, some of them reputed for their exceptional beauty, and his numerous eunuchs, were put up to private auction, with his jewels and all his other precious goods and chattels. Yet the Khedive appeared the same night, smiling and joking, at the Opera, and a few days later I saw him at Abdeen at one of the many functions in which he delighted to display a more than royally lavish hospitality, always slightly barbaric though his court was carefully modelled on European lines. He was stout and jovial and chatted merrily with his foreign guests, in his curious slipshod French, almost every sentence ending irrelevantly with *comme ci comme ça etcetera.* He had a pleasant word for most of his visitors with whom he mingled freely and a ready compliment for every European lady whose charms attracted his notice. No one could look more free from black care, let alone from the shadow of black deeds. Yet little more than a week had passed since I had seen the fallen favourite driving away one afternoon from his Ministry of Finance, and he, too, had worn the same look of unassailable prosperity, lolling back on magenta-coloured cushions, very fat and very sleek, and bestowing smiles of compassionate benignity on the poor beggars who vainly tried to throw their petitions into his carriage.

The Cairo in which this drama was enacted was a very different Cairo from that of the present day. Europeans, whether residents or visitors, were relatively few. During the whole winter 1876–77 the total number of foreign visitors to Egypt was estimated at about 500, and said to constitute a record. Nowadays many more than that number may be seen gathered together on one evening at the height of the Cairo season at any one of the Palace Hotels that compete now with an equally palatial Shepheard's, enlarged and

transformed almost beyond recognition. In 1876 the whole European colony lived still on the fringe of the old Oriental city in a new quarter built for them at Ismail's bidding. One of his earliest ambitions, fostered during his visits to Paris under the Second Empire, had been to Hausmanize his capital, and, though he could not tempt Napoleon III's great town-planner to come out and wave his magic wand over Cairo, he enlisted the services of some of his assistants, and it was with their help that he created the Ezbekieh quarter by converting the old native gardens of the Ezbekieh into a small modern park and erecting round three sides of it large blocks of houses in the European style which filled the gap between the old native bazaars in the Muski and Shepheard's Hotel, then, though still of very modest dimensions, already famous as the favourite rest-house on the overland route to India. Pre-eminently modern was the Opera House, inaugurated in 1871 with *Aida*, specially composed by Verdi at Ismail's behest and produced on a scale of unrivalled magnificence, with a carefully picked ballet from Europe, and processions of real 'Ethiopian' slaves imported for the purpose from the Sudan. A broad new thoroughfare connected the Ezbekieh with the new Palace of Abdeen, whilst other broad boulevards were laid out towards the great new Kasr-el-Nil bridge, then the only one, over the Nile, and on either side of the river rose a succession of palaces, on the right bank those reserved for the Khedive's mother, a masterful old lady with six or seven hundred female attendants and an army of eunuchs, and other almost equally well-equipped *harcem* establishments, and on the left bank, those of Ghizeh for the Khedive's sons and of Ismailyeh for the entertainment of foreign royalties and for special festivities in the European style, when some of the very promiscuous crowd of guests, European as well as Egyptian, could not infrequently be seen handing out to their expectant servants through the windows of the principal reception rooms on the ground floor whole boxes of cigars and magnums of champagne and any other special

delicacies in excess of what they could possibly consume on the premises. But there were as yet scarcely any European residences between the Ezbekieh and the Nile. The British Agent and Consul-General and most of his European colleagues were still content to live in the big new blocks overlooking the Ezbekieh gardens, and there was scarcely a sign as yet of the crowded European quarter afterwards known as the Ismailyeh quarter, and none at all of the Kasr Dubara quarter where the British Residency now stands, or of the Ghezireh quarter across the Nile which has grown up within the last twenty or thirty years round the modern Sports Club with its race-course and its golf-links, then little better than a swamp. Between the Ezbekieh and the riverside suburb of Boulak there were great vacant spaces where, on the annual festival of the *Doseh* a pious Sheikh credited with miraculous powers could be seen riding over closely packed rows of prostrate worshippers whose naked backs never quivered or showed even a bruise under the leather-shod hoofs of his white horse. In the popular revels that followed after nightfall no trace survived of sanctity or even of decency.

Carriages of any kind were almost unknown except those imported for the use of the Court and of a few specially favoured Pashas, and the luxurious broughams in which the *hareem* ladies took the air, lightly veiled but with a black eunuch on the box to keep guard over them. In the Shubra avenue, which was the resort of fashion, a few Englishmen might be seen riding on horseback sometimes in tall grey hats and frockcoats and trousers tightly strapped under their patent leather boots as if they fancied themselves in Rotten Row, whilst in the crowded native streets venerable Cairene white-beards ambled along demurely on stout, sure-footed mules. For the rest, the nimble Egyptian donkey provided the usual and almost universal means of locomotion, and outside Shepheard's Hotel a tribe of native donkey-boys vaunted every day the superiority of their own quadruped –

'Mrs. Langtry' or 'Bismarck' or 'Gambetta' according to what they guessed a traveller's nationality to be – with the same pushful pertinacity and the same impudent readiness of wit that Kinglake in his day had already described in the vivid pages of *Eothen*. The old native city was still untouched by the West and its splendid mosques and shaded bazaars and its crowded coffee-shops heavy with the fumes of hasheesh-laden tobacco, and whole quarters asleep by day, but in which vice of every kind held high revel at night, presented a picture rarely to be seen to-day in any part of the Orient of the mingled glory and havoc of the East.

Even at Court where Turkish had not yet been displaced by Arabic as the customary language of the ruling classes, the process of superficial Europeanization was still very imperfect. Ismail provided chairs for his European guests at a private audience, but they were still offered the old-fashioned *tchibouk* with a yard-long stem and the jewelled bowl of tobacco resting on the floor, and the usual small cup of Turkish coffee was still served in a jewelled *zarf*. To secure official recognition of his *hareem*, limited for public occasions to the four wives allowed to be legitimate by the law of the Prophet, Ismail denominated them according to seniority the *première* and *deuxième* and *troisième* and *quatrième princesse*, who each in turn and in her own apartments held receptions for the ladies of the Corps Diplomatique, whilst the inevitable eunuchs kept watch in the background to prevent any possible intrusion of the male sex. European 'society,' as it was euphemistically termed, embraced men and women of many different nationalities, and amongst them not a few people of more or less dubious antecedents who sought the Khedive's favour each in his or her own way for the advancement of their fortunes. For instance, at the Abdeen Palace reception just after the downfall of the Mufettish, the sensation of the evening was provided by a very attractive lady who had recently arrived from Central Europe with her titled

but otherwise not very reputable husband, in search, some said, of health, and others, less charitable, of employment in another country than his own. She was what the French call *une beauté opulente*, and when the Khedive approached her, she swept so deep a curtsey that her *avant-scène* dropped out of her very low corset. Ismail bent forward to her with a merry twinkle in his eyes: '*Mais Madame, il ne faut pas perdre ces belles choses comme ci comme ça, etcetera,*' and having just caressingly touched them with the tips of his fingers, passed on. But the husband was not kept waiting very long for a suitable appointment at the Viceregal Court.

In such an atmosphere the fate of the Mufettish made even the most cynical European's flesh creep rather unpleasantly, but none dared to ask any questions, and diplomacy discreetly looked the other way. Only Mr. (afterwards Lord) Goschen, who was in Cairo at the time together with M. Joubert to discuss a settlement of the Egyptian Debt, ventured to give Ismail a sharp rap on the knuckles. At one of their further conferences with Ismail a day or two after the disappearance of the Mufettish, the Khedive started to lament the man's deplorable misdeeds, so largely responsible for Egypt's trouble. Goschen, whom I heard tell the story, listened frigidly for a few moments and then interrupted him, saying sharply, 'Your Highness will remember that during our last conversation with regard to the Debt, we reached such and such a point?' Ismail was put out of countenance for just a moment, then quickly took up the financial discussion as if nothing had happened. From his point of view nothing indeed had happened that was not within the legitimate order of things in an Oriental country in which the Master's pleasure was the one supreme law.

The bulk of the population and especially the *fellaheen* rushed, on the other hand, to the conclusion that the downfall of the Mufettish was surely the judgment of God, for he had been in their eyes the visible and most odious embodiment

of the Great Oppression. They had yet to learn that he had been after all merely the chosen and zealous instrument of an oppression which was not to cease until Ismail was himself compelled to relax his grip upon them. He could not afford to relax it of his own free will with bankruptcy staring him in the face. Credit he could no longer hope to get in Europe or from his European bankers in Cairo even on the most usurious terms. If his empty coffers were to be replenished, it could only be by squeezing still more ruthlessly the last drop of sweat and blood out of his exhausted people. Never was the *kurbash* applied more persistently to the soles of the wretched peasant's feet, to make him disgorge his last remaining piastre. I had not to go many miles out of Cairo to see whole gangs of *fellaheen* torn from their own villages and marched, some of them in chains, under an escort of armed police or soldiers, to work on the Khedive's 'domains' which Ismail had created by appropriating for his own benefit, or sometimes nominally for that of his family, more than a quarter of the richest lands in the fertile valley of the Nile. The peasant's own exiguous fields had then to be left uncultivated, and his family to starve if they had not already fled to avoid this worst form of conscription. Ruin was universal and all the evils followed it which in an agricultural country are most to be dreaded. Starvation, sickness and murrain stalked a land of plenty, where the sun-scorched desert can be made to blossom up to the extreme limits of irrigation, and on the drawn faces of an easy-going and mirth-loving people were written such misery and dull despair as I have seldom seen elsewhere.

When I went back to Egypt in 1881, Ismail was no longer on the throne. His incurable extravagance and bad faith had in 1879 at last compelled the Powers to demand his abdication, and he had retired to Europe, where he lived first at Naples, then in Paris and in Portland Place in London, and ultimately on the banks of the Bosporus, and always in

considerable affluence – and for ever intriguing with unfailing zest though with scant success, until sixteen years later I saw his body brought back to Cairo and buried with great pomp and many demonstrations of popular grief – his misdeeds forgotten and only his spectacular magnificence and his rarer exhibitions of impulsive generosity remembered by an emotional and light-hearted people whom England had rescued from the misery into which he had plunged them.

In 1881 Ismail's son, the Khedive Tewfik, was reigning, but could hardly be described as ruling, in his stead. I remember him as a well-intentioned, mild-mannered, almost liberal-minded man, a much more pious Mohammedan than his father, but no fanatic, the husband of only one wife and a model of domestic virtues, friendly in his own dignified way to foreigners and ready to act loyally upon the advice of those – amongst them Evelyn Baring, afterwards Lord Cromer – who had entered his service as the representatives of Anglo-French financial and administrative control; in fact a lover of peace in his country as well as in his household, but doomed to reap the dragon's teeth which his father, before whom he used to tremble, had sown. In 1881 the Nationalist movement which Ismail had once sought to stage as a harmless but specious counterpoise to foreign political pressure, had waxed fast and furious, and with it a mutinous spirit in the Egyptian army which he had also toyed with when he incited his troops to make military demonstrations in the streets of Cairo and drag his own Ministers out of their carriages and pull their beards as the servile instruments of their Khedive's enemies, i.e. of his inconvenient European creditors. Arabi 'the Egyptian,' with a few other officers, like himself, not of Turkish but of *fellah* origin, had come to the front as the leader of a militant Nationalism, directed in the first instance against the Turkish ruling class who still monopolized most of the higher ranks in the army as well as most of the higher posts in the civil

administration. But though Ismail was gone, Egypt had still to bear the heavy burden of the foreign loans with which he had recklessly saddled her, and her people had not yet had time to realize that the financial control enforced by the Western Powers was no less essential for their protection against a revival of the old oppressive methods of indigenous administration as for that of the foreign creditors to whom Ismail had mortgaged his country. So the army, concerned at first chiefly with its own wrongs, soon mobilized popular discontents for a general revolt against all foreigners and all foreign influence.

European opinion, scarcely more discriminating, was almost unanimous in denouncing Arabi as a dangerous military adventurer. But the impression which he left on my mind after a good many conversations with him in the days of his short power and once again when he was in exile in Ceylon, is that of an honest but very ignorant patriot who was often the tool of his meaner surroundings. With little or no education he had, like many Egyptians, a natural gift of language, and was the first leader of his people who spoke to them in their own Arabic tongue. He was and looked a *fellah*, and the iron had entered into his soul during the long years of the Great Oppression under which his own humble kith and kin had groaned and been helpless. He realized vaguely the need of drastic reforms. He had picked up some of the catchwords of European democracy and talked glibly of liberty, equality and fraternity, and dreamt of a great transformation scene in which the Egyptian people, who for two thousand years had never been their own masters, would rise suddenly under his leadership to the full status of a nation. He was not himself a fanatic, but he could not resist the temptation of enlisting in support of Egyptian Nationalism the elements of Mohammedan fanaticism always latent in an Islamic country, though the Egyptians are probably more free from it in normal times than almost any other Mohammedans. He complained bitterly that Europeans would not

understand him or even listen to him, and there was doubtless some truth in this. For the Powers who had undertaken to rescue Egypt both from bankruptcy and from the misrule which had led to bankruptcy looked upon him merely as a mischievous disturber of the peace essential to their task, and when he more or less openly challenged the authority of the well-meaning ruler whom they had placed on the throne, they felt in honour bound to give the latter their full support. The few foreign sympathisers, like Wilfred Blunt, to whom Arabi looked for advice, merely helped to mislead him with regard to public opinion abroad by exaggerating the jealousies which undoubtedly divided but did not paralyse the Powers, and by railing wildly against the iniquities of cosmopolitan finance. Anti-foreign rioting in Alexandria which resulted in the killing of some foreigners, and the looting of European houses, and a demonstrative arming of the old forts at Alexandria, for which Arabi was much more clearly and directly responsible, led to the bombardment by the British fleet on July 11, 1882, the French fleet having sailed away the night before under very unexpected instructions from Paris to withdraw and avoid hostilities. The Egyptian army retreated in disorder, but burnt a large part of Alexandria before any British force could be landed, and as none of the European Powers or even Turkey would listen to us when we invited them to help in belling the Egyptian cat, Mr. Gladstone's Government reluctantly despatched a British expeditionary force to do the job.

During the Egyptian campaign I acted as one of the *Standard's* 'War Correspondents' at Alexandria. It was an easy task, for on that side we had only to 'contain' the fairly strong position taken up at Kafr-Dawar a few miles outside the town by a portion of the Egyptian army, and I spent most of my time at Ramleh watching desultory and generally quite innocuous bombardments which Kafr-Dawar opened on our lines almost every afternoon an hour before

sunset, and riding out at sunrise almost every morning with a small body of mounted cavalry to reconnoitre fairly close up to the 'Gippy' lines. Sir Garnet Wolseley's plan, kept a profound secret till the last moment, was to transfer the bulk of the British forces by sea to the Suez Canal and, after joining hands with a strong contingent sent from India, deliver a crushing blow across the desert. Arabi's army made only one short stand at Tell-el-Kebir, where its trenches were rushed before dawn, and in a couple of hours it had melted away like the morning mist under a fierce Egyptian sun, and with it the whole Nationalist movement for which it stood. Only a few days after Tell-el-Kebir I witnessed in Cairo a great review of the British army. The large crowd displayed intense curiosity but not a sign of ill-will, though many of the humbler folk had only just had time to exchange their uniforms for the long blue *galoubieh* in which they felt much more at ease, and some even showed more thrift than fear by wearing their munition boots – doubtless far too valuable to be as hastily thrown away as their swords and rifles. The Khedive, who had remained throughout the brief campaign in his palace at Alexandria under the protection of the British fleet, returned quietly to his capital, and Arabi, who had surrendered to Wolseley on the stricken field, owed his life, which he had technically forfeited as a rebel, to the intervention of Lord Dufferin, deputed from his embassy at Constantinople to act as High Commissioner in Cairo. Some years afterwards, when I saw Arabi in Ceylon, during the banishment into which the death sentence had been commuted under British pressure, he confessed to me quite simply that he felt nothing but gratitude towards the British, who were doing in Egypt most of the things he had himself wished and proposed to do. A little later he was allowed even to return quietly to Cairo where, almost unnoticed, he continued until his death to follow England's work in Egypt with increasing admiration, for none were greater gainers by it than the *fellaheen*,

from whom he had himself sprung. Whatever others might think or say about the British occupation, the evil days of the *kurbash* and the press gangs would never, he knew, return so long as we stayed in Egypt.

CHAPTER III

THE SPACIOUS DAYS OF LORD CROMER

BUT were we to stay in Egypt? That was the question that was put to us immediately after the British occupation and for many years afterwards, not at first by the Egyptians, but by Turkey in virtue of her rights of suzerainty, and by foreign Powers jealous of an ascendancy which they identified with the presence of a British army of occupation in the Valley of the Nile. The same question is being put to us to-day, not of course by Turkey, whose suzerainty lapsed with the Great War, nor by the foreign Powers, who have now formally recognized our claim to a privileged position in Egypt, but by the Egyptian people, who contend that the presence of a British army of occupation is incompatible with the rights of an independent and sovereign State which we have formally recognized to the Kingdom of Egypt.

For some time after the occupation British Governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, protested – and protested sincerely – that we did not intend to stay in Egypt indefinitely, though they found it impossible to fix a date for the evacuation, which could only take place after the establishment of a stable system of government and administration. In 1885 Lord Salisbury actually sent out Sir Henry Drummond Wolf on a special mission to negotiate an agreement with Turkey which would have provided on certain terms for the evacuation of Egypt within two years. But France and Russia objected to the right of re-entry reserved for us in the event of serious disturbances in Egypt, and they brought such pressure to bear on the Sultan Abdul Hamid that he finally refused to ratify the agreement. I was in Constantinople when Drummond Wolf at last left the Turkish capital where he had been tarrying for weeks pending the Sultan's decision, and in the evening after his depar-

ture I attended a reception at the British Embassy and saw Sir William White, the last of the great *Eltchis*, to whose judgment Drummond Wolf's mission had never commended itself, greet his French and Russian colleagues, who came in together, with a boisterous laugh and a sturdy grip of the hand, and heard him throw a well-directed douche of cold water on the pride they were taking in their latest diplomatic achievement, by shouting to them in his peculiarly stentorian tone of voice, '*Bon soir, mes chers collègues, vous êtes les biens-venus*,' and then proceeding to tell them that he had just written to his Government to ask that they should be given the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath for the immense service they had done him by expediting the departure of 'ce cher Drummond Wolf'!

Henceforth the assurance of a speedy evacuation of Egypt grew fainter and less frequent; for the event was showing how much easier it was to occupy Egypt than to evacuate it. Arabi's revolt and its suppression had destroyed the old fabric of indigenous administration, and the task of reconstruction was laborious and slow. Only by the success with which we discharged it could our continued presence be justified, and fortunately a great Englishman was there to organize success. Within a year after Tell-el-Kebir Evelyn Baring, who had known Egypt in the days of Ismail, returned from India, where he had held the responsible office of Finnance Minister, to take up, as British Agent and Consul-General in Cairo, a post in which his rank was no higher than that of the diplomatic representatives of the other great European powers; but his authority, never formally defined, grew steadily, though by slow stages, and as his wise and patient statesmanship bore abundant and tangible fruit, to be well-nigh supreme in every field of Egyptian administration, and scarcely less so in the counsels of successive British Cabinets whenever Egyptian questions were to the front. The obstinate antagonism of France, who could not forget or forgive the loss of the former Anglo-French condominium

in Egypt, and the frequent and almost systematic abuse by the foreign communities of their privileged position under the Capitulation Treaties, often harassed and delayed him in the work of Egyptian reconstruction, but he believed in the patient unravelling and not in the cutting of knots, and always hoped, though it was a long-deferred hope, for a general settlement of Anglo-French differences as the best and perhaps the only means of easing the tension in Egypt. I had the good fortune not only to visit Egypt half a dozen times in the course of his twenty-three years' pro-consulate but to acquire his confidence and friendship, and I came to know, in some cases very intimately, the picked band of Englishmen, many his own selection, who under his vigilant guidance introduced new methods and a new spirit into the Egyptian administration. It was finance and irrigation and public security which then stood in most urgent need of reform, and reform meant not only skilled knowledge and expert organization, but an incessant fight against the old evils of corruption and oppression, and of incompetency and waste.

Conspicuous amongst those whose practical achievements were informed with a fine idealism were Milner, fresh from the Treasury, who wrote afterwards, in his *England and Egypt*, an admirable account of the race against bankruptcy which he helped Cromer to win for Egypt; Moncrieff, Garstin, Willcocks, three great engineers who had learnt irrigation in India, and Scott from the High Court of Bombay, whose more thorny task it was to reorganize justice. I renewed acquaintance with Edgar Vincent, now Lord d'Abernon, who, as financial adviser to the Egyptian Government, maintained in Egypt, with Baring at his elbow to advise and control him, the reputation he brought with him from Constantinople of a heaven-born financier; and, later on, with Kitchener, who laid, in the reorganization of the Egyptian army, the foundation of his own military fortunes. I was even privileged to give Kitchener a very sound piece of advice on one occasion when in a passing mood of disappointment he was tempted

to seek transfer from military to civil employment. I had known him in Asia Minor when he was one of the soldier Vice-Consuls appointed under Sir Charles Wilson to superintend the reforms in the Turkish administration to which Abdul Hamid was specially pledged to us under the Cyprus Convention guaranteeing the integrity of his Asiatic dominions. He had come to Egypt with the British Army of Occupation, and was one of the first British officers to be transferred to the Egyptian army as reconstituted under British command. He had served with distinction both in the ill-starred Nile Expedition for the relief of Gordon and in the Eastern Sudan during the great onrush of triumphant Mahdi-ism. It was his ambition, and, as the event proved, a very legitimate one, to become Sirdar of the Egyptian Army. But an appointment had just been made, and he thought deliberately made, that would, he imagined, almost certainly blast all his hopes. I happened to be then in Cairo and received a note from him asking me to dine the same evening at the Club, as there was something he wanted urgently to talk over with me. I found him very much mortified, and, as I thought, quite unreasonably dejected. He was going to 'chuck the army' if only he could get a decent appointment on the civil side in Egypt in which he could qualify for something better. As it was well known that Baring, as he still was, had been turning his attention to the Ministry of the Interior, which had not yet been brought under such close control as other public departments, did I think he would have a good chance of employment there as Adviser or Under-Secretary? Baring, he thought, was bound to go some day to India as Viceroy or else join the Cabinet at home. We had, he felt certain, come to Egypt to stay, and, as the British Agency would always require administrative experience, it would never be given to a mere professional diplomatist, and probably not to a mere soldier, but to an administrator, and for choice one who knew Egypt well. Why not to him, if in the meantime he could get a chance of making a name for

himself in the Interior where a strong British administration was admittedly needed? I was entirely taken aback, but I had no hesitation in urging him not make 'the biggest mistake of his life.' I did not know in the least, I said, what prospects he might or might not have of getting a civil appointment such as the one he had mentioned; but if I were inclined to have a wager on such matter, I would willingly wager that, if he stuck to the Army, he would yet be Sirdar within five years. He was in one of his obstinate moods, and though we went on talking for a long time, I was quite uncertain whether I had made any impression upon him when we parted. On the very next day, however, he let me know that having slept over it he had thought better of it and was not going to 'chuck the army.' Within two years he became Sirdar, and he ultimately reached, a good many years later, his further ambition to be one of Cromer's successors. It would be tempting but idle to speculate as to what his future would have been had he actually given way to his short-lived disappointment and never become Lord Kitchener of Khartum, and afterwards, of the Vaal, or Secretary of State for War in 1914, when he rendered perhaps the greatest of all his services to the country by warning it in a rare flash of intuition that the Great War was bound to last several years, and would require hundreds of thousands of men to fight it to a victorious issue. His mind, I think, usually worked much more slowly than on that occasion, and even his powers of military organization, which were greater than those of command in the field, were marred by lack of elasticity and inability or reluctance to delegate authority. He had, however, many if not all the elements of greatness, and if he was sometimes ruthless in breaking down opposition, he knew how to secure the loyalty and affection of those who served him and knew him best. In the old days in Egypt he was as popular with his 'Gippy' soldiers as he was with his friends' children, with whom he was generally ready to romp to their hearts' content.

Baring – or Cromer as he was afterwards styled and will live in history – towered above all the rest. There were some who called him 'Over-Baring,' and he could be masterful enough when circumstances required a prompt decision; but it was the systematic patience and orderly method with which he carried through his huge task of reconstruction that made upon me the deepest impression of moral and intellectual strength. Never, perhaps, was his patience more conspicuous than in his relations with Gordon during the first months of 1884, when, after he had gone to Khartum with definite instructions to evacuate the Sudan, he insisted on the adoption of a totally different policy, heroic no doubt, but disastrous, which he summed up within five weeks of his arrival in the deliberate announcement that 'he could not leave Khartum if he would, nor would he if he could.' He was henceforth deaf to all arguments, and to all reminders as to the original purpose of his mission, to which he had himself unreservedly subscribed. The Mahdi's forces soon cut him off from all communication with the outside world, and after eight months' siege, in circumstances which only a man of his splendid faith could have endured or – perhaps even more wonderful – have made others endure, who were neither of his race nor of his creed, he died a Christian soldier's death when the British expedition tardily despatched for his relief had fought its way across the desert and was almost within sight of the beleaguered city. Popular opinion, carried away by a great wave of natural sympathy and admiration for the inspired hero in Khartum, was in those days, and has been even more recently, far less than just to the statesman in Cairo, who had to interpret as best he could Gordon's conflicting and often contradictory appeals and to reckon with the frequent fluctuations of the Ministerial mind at home. Gordon's temperament and Cromer's were unquestionably far as the poles asunder. If I never knew Gordon as well as I came to know Cromer, my still youthful imagination had been so vividly impressed with the halo of glorious adventure

which he had already won for himself in unfamiliar corners of the earth, that I twice begged him to give me an opportunity of serving under him, once when he had already been Governor-General of the Sudan in Ismail's reign – when he very kindly told me I was too young and there were already too many Englishmen of my age buried in the Sudan – and again when he was on his way back to Khartum on his last and desperate mission. In fact, but for the accidental miscarriage of a telegram sent to me from Berber by Colonel Stewart, the only British officer he took up with him, I might quite possibly have had permission and time to join him. That is, however, only one of the might-have-been's that are of little interest to any one but oneself.

More to the point is my recollection of my meeting with Gordon a few months before his forlorn hope in the Sudan at Laurence Oliphant's house on Mount Carmel. Gordon was at that time living in Jerusalem entirely absorbed in the study of Biblical topography. The French, more than usually jealous and suspicious of all British activities in those parts since our occupation of Egypt, could not for a moment believe that for an Englishman and a General with Gordon's world-wide reputation Biblical topography was anything but a cloak for sinister political activities, and the French Consulate at Jerusalem watched all his movements. He had set out, he told us, on the previous day for one of his usual long walks into the country, and he had soon observed that he was being followed, as was also quite usual, by a Syrian whom he believed to be specially employed by the French to shadow him. So instead of turning back after a few miles' stretch he determined to go on and see how soon he would tire the man out. He walked on for many miles before he did so, and then, as it was getting too late for him to be back in Jerusalem before dark, he decided to push on to Nablous for the night – a matter of 35 or 40 miles – and having slept there he had thought he might as well push on next day to Haifa; and so there he was, and would the Oliphants give

him another night's lodging? During the remainder of the afternoon he discoursed to us chiefly about the work he was doing at Jerusalem, and all his religious enthusiasm found vent in describing the various discoveries he was making and explaining the light they seemed to him to throw on many passages of both the Old and the New Testament. But after supper the conversation shifted much further afield and he and Oliphant fell to comparing notes on their own experiences more than a quarter of a century earlier in China, when the former was engaged in putting down the Taiping rebellion and the latter was attached to Lord Elgin's mission. I listened with rapt interest to the flood of reminiscences which both men poured forth with equal gusto, but nothing struck me more than the strangely erratic working of Gordon's mind. He started with an uncompromising denunciation of the selfishness and greed of Western policy in China, and declared 'there could be no salvation for the Chinese until they had thrown off the incubus of foreign traders and foreign diplomats.' Yet at the end of the evening, just before we all retired to bed, his last words were that there could be no salvation for China until some one came in from outside – ourselves for choice – and cleared out every Chinese Yamen as dens of corruption and oppression sucking the lifeblood out of the people, and hanged every Mandarin in his own court-yard, the great Li Hung Chang first and foremost, whom he had known of old as 'the scoundrel' who had broken his word to him at Foochow and beheaded some of the Chinese rebels he was pledged to spare. Gordon's complete change of front in the course of barely an hour was eminently characteristic, for he was, I think, incapable of seeing more than one facet of a question at a time. Upon that facet he would concentrate for the moment the whole force of his emotional nature and deliver his soul with an emphasis of which no one could doubt the sincerity. Then later on he would see another facet of the same question from an entirely different angle of vision and express himself with equal

emphasis in a diametrically opposite sense without any regard for what he might have said a short time before or in other circumstances than those for the moment present to his mind. Oliphant, who was a kindred spirit, remarked to me laughingly as we were saying good night after Gordon had left the room, 'That is a man after my own heart, for he is not afraid of contradicting himself and whatever he says always rings true.'

But that was a peculiarity that did not make Gordon easy to work with, and least of all for such a man as Cromer, who looked round every question on which he had to come to a responsible decision and never hastily committed himself to any action of which he had not weighed, as far as they could be humanly foreseen, all the possible consequences direct and indirect. He also could feel deeply, but his judgment constantly kept his emotions under severe restraint. From the very first he had had grave misgivings as to the selection of Gordon for carrying out the evacuation of the Sudan. Gordon was the Cabinet's selection and not his own. His duty was to give him from Cairo such assistance as lay in his power. When the British Government was intensely perturbed and even shocked at Gordon's demand that Zobeir, the notorious slave dealer interned in Cairo, should be sent up to help him in 'smashing the Mahdi,' it was Cromer who urged the Cabinet to let Gordon have him, for as he had been refused all military assistance, it would be a grave responsibility to refuse him the one man he asked for. Nor could he or Nubar, the Egyptian Prime Minister, suggest any other. Yet none could feel more keenly the dangers involved in such a decision, for Zobeir's son had been hunted down and executed years ago under Gordon's orders as a worse slave dealer even than his father, and in the British Agency there had once been a dramatic meeting between Gordon and Zobeir in which the latter had made his implacable hatred manifest by cursing the former as the slayer of his son. Cromer, in a word, was a great public servant imbued

with all the best traditions of the British public service. Where he was personally concerned he would urge his views frankly and fully upon the government he served, but if he failed to secure assent to them he deemed it his duty to carry out to the best of his ability and with the utmost loyalty the policy imposed upon him. Gordon, on the other hand, sincerely believed himself to be guided by a higher light which it was his duty to follow. As he once pathetically wrote in his Khartum journals, he was 'not made to obey. I own to having been very insubordinate to Her Majesty's Government and its officials, but it is my nature and I cannot help it. I know if I was chief I would never employ myself, for I am incorrigible' – a confession which he was to seal and redeem with his blood.

In the internal administration of Egypt Cromer's difficulties as long as the Khedive Tewfik lived were only those inherent to an abnormal situation, but when Tewfik died very prematurely in January, 1892, he was succeeded by Abbas Hilmi who was not yet eighteen, but already in many ways old beyond his years. I had seen him formerly with his English tutor as a bright and well-behaved little boy. But unfortunately as, owing to Anglo-French political rivalry it had been deemed inexpedient to send him to school either in England or in France, he had completed his education, as far as it went, at a Military Academy in Vienna, whence he brought with him to Egypt an extravagant belief in his own military capacity as well as in the divine rights of Kingship. He lost no time in asserting, as he thought, his own absolute authority. He publicly affronted Kitchener and the British officers of the Egyptian Army on the parade ground, and when a stern reproof from Cromer compelled him to make amends to them, he complained to me bitterly of the way in which he had been treated. 'Am I a monkey on a stick to dance to the British Consul-General's tune? Have I not myself learnt soldiering in one of the greatest military schools of Europe? Am I not, as Khedive, Commander-in-

Chief of the Egyptian Army? Am I to be denied the privileges of a position to which even your Queen Victoria, though a woman, is held to be constitutionally entitled?' Though he tried to say all this with good humour, the flow of blood to his face and the nervous trembling of his hands betrayed his temper, and he only regained some composure when I observed to him that it was not so much a question of his rights as of the way in which he asserted them, and that Queen Victoria herself, though doubtless, as he said, constitutionally the head of the British Army, never indulged in any public and unpleasant criticisms of her generals, just as, though also the head of the Church of England, she abstained from administering public reproofs to her bishops. Abbas was still in reality little more than a boy, headstrong and irascible, in whom the atmosphere of the Austrian capital had tended to develop all his worst tendencies. Perhaps a lighter hand than Cromer's would have known how to deal with him more successfully. Cromer, no doubt, imagined that he always dealt with him paternally, but it may not always have seemed so to Abbas. He gave the young Khedive at first some rope in regard to changes in the personnel of the Egyptian Ministry, but there soon came a moment when he thought it necessary to pull him up sharply. 'I am going to put my foot down,' he said to me one day, when even Riaz Pacha, who had been appointed Prime Minister as a *persona grata* at the Palace, in January, 1893, incurred the Khedive's displeasure and resigned just a year later. Cromer had asked for an audience that day and told me to come and see him in the evening, as he might be able to let me know how it had gone off. It had 'gone off very well,' he said, with that curious quiver of the nostrils which used to betray a subconscious sense of humour, and he had treated Abbas 'quite paternally.' He then went on to tell me how he had assured the Khedive that he would be most reluctant to interfere with his freedom of choice as to the successor to Riaz, and how then Abbas had put forward the names of men whom he had successively

to reject as, in the circumstances, 'quite impossible,' and had finally had to declare that there was only one name on which they could both agree, and that was Nubar Pasha, 'and to this the Khedive agreed without further ado.'

I could not help wondering what account Abbas would have given of that characteristic interview. For he, I knew, heartily disliked the Minister who had, almost alone in his day, stood up against Ismail's despotic rulership. Yet Cromer too in recommending him had had to sacrifice some of his own prejudices, for both the temperament and the methods of the two men, both able and both masterful, frequently clashed. Nubar, an Armenian of Asia Minor by birth and educated in France, had entered the Egyptian service in the grim days of Mohammed Ali and, at the end of a long and often stormy career, was the only Egyptian statesman with a European reputation. He had created in Ismail's days, sometimes with his help and sometimes in defiance of his secret opposition, the Mixed Tribunals which have survived all the vicissitudes of the last forty years as an institution equally valuable to Egypt and to the foreigners who have occasion to resort to it for justice. At the Constantinople conference of 1876, which was a last effort to avert war between Turkey and Russia, when the Powers at one moment contemplated recommending the appointment of a Christian Governor for the Bulgarian provinces of European Turkey, Nubar's was the only name on which most of them were prepared to agree. Driven into exile, and not for the first time, by Ismail a few months before he was himself deposed, Nubar returned to Egypt soon after the British occupation, and at once resumed in Cairo society the conspicuous position to which his past career and his striking personality entitled him. There was a patriarchal side to him which he was specially fond of displaying in his relations with the tenants and farm labourers on his estates, where, in his later years, he often liked to exchange the black coat of the Pasha for a bucolic garment akin to a white smock frock. He prided himself on having

learnt to be a practical farmer and loved to be called *Abu-el-Fellah* – the Father of the *fellah*. But many foreigners still living who visited Egypt in his time will doubtless best remember him as a delightful host in his Cairo home. He was too conservative in his habits to follow the fashionable world of Cairo into the new Ismailieh or Ghezireh quarters which grew and spread rapidly after the British occupation. He preferred his old but spacious house in the street which still bears his name, not far from Shepheard's Hotel, and the first European quarter laid out at the beginning of Ismail's reign. Wherever he chose to live, his catholic hospitality knew how to make his house a social centre in which travellers and residents of all nationalities, officials and diplomatists, explorers and archæologists, men of business and men of letters, Orientals and Orientalists, could find congenial refuge from the noisy and somewhat vulgar hubbub of a Cairo season. Nubar's own conversation had an irresistible charm to which Cromer himself has testified, and there were few subjects connected with Eastern or Western life and history and literature on which he could not talk interestingly and often brilliantly. He was to this extent cosmopolitan that his intellectual gifts and his experience of public affairs in many different countries had made him in the best sense a man of the world.

It was at Cromer's own request that he first re-entered public life after the British occupation. Bowing, however, reluctantly, to the decision of the British Government that the Sudan must be abandoned, he accepted the Premiership in 1884, in order to assist in carrying out a policy so unpopular in Egypt that the easy-going Sherif Pasha had resigned rather than subscribe to it. He had welcomed British intervention in Egypt as essential to the salvation of the country, and, with British control firmly established in the Valley of the Nile, he felt that resistance to the policy which the British Government imposed was both unwise and futile. Though during his tenure of office, which lasted on that occa-

sion till 1888, there had been frequent friction over minor questions between him and the British Agency, it was to his patriotism that Cromer again had recourse six years later when he saw the youthful Abbas aiming at the revival of the old Khedivial traditions of arbitrary rule. Nubar's acceptance of the Premiership enabled Cromer to put a curb on Abbas' self-will, and the latter henceforth kept his personal ambitions under restraint until Cromer had left Egypt. But it soon became clearer than ever that between Cromer and Nubar enduring co-operation was almost impossible. One may regret it, for Nubar had a lifelong understanding of his country and his people, of which Cromer was inclined to underrate the value; but he lacked, and may well be excused for having lacked, a practical appreciation of the extraordinarily anomalous position in which Cromer himself was placed as the representative of a Government that, but for him, might still have hesitated to face, and yet could not repudiate, its heavy responsibilities in Egypt. The differences between the two men arose far more over the application of the principles of administration than over the principles themselves. Cromer has cordially admitted that Nubar had no difficulty in grasping a European principle. But such superficially European forms of administration as had been imported into Egypt before the British occupation were borrowed mainly from the French, and Nubar's education and greater knowledge of France than of any other European country led him to favour the cut and dried formalism which the French bureaucracy has always affected. Cromer, on the contrary, favoured the rough and ready methods which had hitherto served Englishmen so well in the application of Western principles of government to Oriental countries, and with the Englishman's gift of concentrating his mind upon each successive aspect of a difficult problem as it arises, he was rather contemptuous of Nubar's more spacious generalizations, which he was apt to dismiss as 'viewy.' Cromer regarded Nubar as too emotional. Nubar regarded Cromer as

too unimaginative. Each resented an opposition of which it was difficult for either to apprehend the reasons. When the opposition came from Nubar, Cromer set it down to his Oriental love of intrigue, though that is a charge which hardly squares with Nubar's open assertion of independence in administrative matters from the moment when he took office in 1884, and still less with the challenge which he rather recklessly threw down to Cromer in London in 1887 in Lord Salisbury's own presence. Nubar, on the other hand, was too prone to impute Cromer's opposition to sheer personal masterfulness and an almost brutal reliance on the big battalions behind him. Both, it may be admitted, had a keen love of power, not so much for its own sake, as because they both had immense self-reliance, in neither case unjustified, and they were both confident that they could do big things – sometimes, in theory at least, the same things – if they were allowed to do them in their own way. But, with the British occupation, there was no more room for two kings in Egypt than in the proverbial Brentford.

Nubar did not actually resign the Premiership and retire finally from public life till November, 1895. He had had a bad accident about a year earlier; he had slipped and fallen while he was inspecting some live stock on one of his estates, and all through the winter of 1894-95 he had to lie up and could rarely and only for a short time go out for a drive or to transact urgent public business at his office. He felt that his hold on public affairs was slackening, and he was already waiting only for a suitable opportunity to place his resignation in the hands of the Khedive, or rather, one should say, of Lord Cromer, without causing any unnecessary embarrassment to either. It was during that period that I got to know him best. For I was spending a couple of months then in Cairo and he liked me to go round and sit with him in the afternoons, and sometimes to go out driving with him when he felt well enough to be lifted into a carriage. On these occasions he seldom talked current affairs. What he loved was to pour

out to a willing listener his recollections, always vivid and always graphically told, of just over half a century of Egyptian history in which *pars magna fuit.* He had witnessed the tragic end of the Turkish Capudan Pasha who had gone over with his fleet to Mohammed Ali during the latter's second rebellion against the Sultan. After the Pasha of Egypt had made his peace with Constantinople the Sublime Porte repeatedly called upon him to surrender the Admiral, and to do him justice he for a long time steadfastly refused. For four years he turned a deaf ear to the insistence of Constantinople. Then one day the *raison d'état* prevailed. The Governor of Alexandria was instructed to invite the Admiral to call at his *Konak* on a matter of particular interest. The Viceroy was in Cairo. The Admiral responded to the invitation. In accordance with etiquette the Governor received him at the door, respectfully led him up the steps to the place of honour, where he seated himself in a humble attitude of expectancy with his legs crossed under him. After due exchange of the usual Turkish civilities – 'Your Excellency,' said the Governor, 'you are aware that our sojourn in this world is brief, and that we must all bow to the will of God.' 'You say truly,' returned Ahmet Pasha, without a trace of emotion visible on his countenance. 'Will your Excellency please order a *sejadeh* (praying rug) to be brought to me?' The *sejadeh* having been spread, the Admiral went through the genuflexions and recited the prayers prescribed by the Mohammedan ritual. This done, he seated himself again with undiminished composure. Thereupon the Governor, a white-bearded old man, clapped his hands together (the old-fashioned way of summoning an attendant) and called for coffee, but for coffee for one only. The coffee came, and a Mameluke presented the cup to the Admiral, who knew that it contained his death potion. 'Is it His Highness' will that I should drink?' and the Governor having bowed affirmatively, he drained the cup slowly and in small sips as good manners require, and the conversation continued serenely. When the Admiral begged

leave to depart the Governor conducted him back to his carriage. Next day it was learnt that Ahmet Pasha died during the night 'from apoplexy.' That was, Nubar said, the last occasion on which the lethal cup of coffee was publicly administered in Egypt. He had himself been in close attendance both on Mohammed Ali and his son Ibrahim during their last years when, morbidly jealous and suspicious of each other, each was at times on the verge of madness, and Nubar was often employed to carry awkward and even dangerous messages from the one to the other. He had accompanied Ibrahim on his grand European tour in the winter of 1845-46, when for the first time European courts welcomed an Oriental potentate of his rank and fame – the victor of Konia and Nesib, who had twice humbled the pride of the Ottoman Sultan, and on the second occasion almost had Constantinople itself within his grasp, when Russia threw her own army into the Turkish capital to save the Ottoman Empire for her own purposes from immediate disaster. Nubar was present with him at all the brilliant functions organized for his entertainment during his five weeks' stay as the guest of King Louis Philippe in Paris, and afterwards in London where the Egyptian Prince was received like a crowned head by Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, and a great military parade was held in St. James' Park by the Duke of Wellington, when the greatest living soldier of the East met the greatest living soldier of the West. Ibrahim was the lion of the season and Lord Palmerston, who had once risked war with France in order to defeat Mohammed Ali's dreams of Egyptian independence, came down the steps of his house to greet and escort his son as the most honoured of guests. Wherever Ibrahim went Nubar, who acted as his interpreter, was treated with exceptional distinction, and whilst he thus gained his first insight into political conditions in Europe, nothing impressed him, he said, more deeply than Queen Victoria's charm of youth combined with maturity of manner and judgment during the long audience granted by her to

Ibrahim, and, next to that, the vision he had of England's immense industrial resources as the secret of her growing power during a tour through her chief manufacturing cities.

Far less agreeable was the visit which he subsequently paid to Constantinople in attendance again upon Ibrahim who had determined to apply in person to the Sultan for his investiture as Pasha of Egypt, when his father's mind had already given way so far that it was no longer possible for him to exercise even the semblance of supreme authority. Ibrahim's own mind was almost equally unhinged, and though he comported himself with dignity whilst he was at Constantinople, and successfully fulfilled the purpose of his visit, he frequently gave way on the voyage out, and still more on the voyage back, to frightful paroxysms of rage in which he threatened all his entourage in turn with immediate death. All one night Nubar, whom he distrusted less than the others, had to sit up with him and distract his mind as best he could from gloomy thoughts about his own health and from passionate outbreaks against his own father, whose recovery he at times foresaw and always dreaded. Not long afterwards during the night of November 25, 1848, Nubar with only five other persons, three of whom were, like himself, Christians, stood round Ibrahim's death-bed, already deserted by all his courtiers, and on the following day saw his coffin hurriedly hoisted on the shoulders of half a dozen menials, with a few hired wailing women, who were left to follow it almost alone before it reached the family burial ground, the while his father, only semi-conscious and walking as if in a trance, wandered through the streets of Cairo escorted by his Mamelukes and still respectfully greeted by the populace who, because he was mad, revered in him, as Orientals do, a seer inspired by God. It was whispered that before Ibrahim set out for Constantinople, Mohammed Ali had seen in a vision the departure, the investiture, the return and the death of his son. When he heard he was dead his only remark was: 'I knew it. He locked me up, he was cruel to me as he was to everybody.

God has punished him, he has taken his soul, but I as his father must intercede for him with the All-Merciful.' The old Pasha himself lingered on for several months in senile decay, and died in his palace of Shubra near Cairo on August 2, 1849. It was during a drive to that disused palace that Nubar described the Great Pasha's death to me, neglected and forgotten, most of all by his own favourite son's son who was already reigning in his stead, and could not even wait until the end had come to play havoc with most of the things and men that the old man had cherished. Nubar had known and served in turn all Mohammed Ali's successors; the gloomy and cruel Abbas I, to whose qualities – for Nubar always insisted that he had a better side to him – few people had ever done justice; the easy-going Said, who had encouraged a whole swarm of European adventurers to descend upon Egypt in search of its flesh pots, including one far greater, doubtless, than all the others, but whom Nubar had always intensely, and not without some reason, disliked and distrusted, Ferdinand de Lesseps, the creator of the Suez Canal; which Nubar always regarded as a fatal gift to Egypt; the despotic spendthrift Ismail, whom Nubar had once wrestled with for a whole day when he was 'seeing red,' in a desperate endeavour to save him from headlong ruin; the kindly Tewfik, who reaped the whirlwind after Ismail had sown the storm that was only to end with the British occupation; and last of all, Abbas II, who had inherited some of his forbears' worst inclinations, without, however, the power they had had to gratify them. Thus it was the whole history of modern Egypt that Nubar would unfold to me from day to day, as he had lived through it himself – sometimes with not unnatural bitterness, more often with a keen sense of humour and, take it all in all, with the serenity of an old philosopher who felt that his own day was over, but had no cause to be ashamed. Soon after his final resignation he retired to Paris where, in spite of his life-long antagonism to French ambitions in Egypt, he had a large circle of personal friends. It was

there that after a painful operation which at first encouraged hopes of a recovery, he passed away in January, 1899, concerned most of all during that last period with the sufferings of his Armenian kinsmen in Asia Minor against whom Abdul Hamid had inaugurated the systematic policy of massacre which reached its climax during the Great War. He had with him the devoted wife and the children and grandchildren who had, alike in good and evil days, always held the foremost place in his affections.

It was at that time, too, when the nineteenth century was drawing to its close that Cromer was reaching the zenith of his great Egyptian career. His work of reconstruction had been patiently carried out in successive stages and with such conspicuous success that the Sudan, of which he had advised the temporary abandonment in 1884, had been reconquered at Omdurman in 1898, thanks to British military co-operation, but with the effective assistance of the Egyptian Army, reorganized by Kitchener, and very largely at the expense of the once bankrupt Egyptian Treasury. Already those vast regions devastated for fourteen years by a flood of barbarism which had reduced their population from over eight to little more than two millions, were entering on a period of extraordinary recovery under British administration and with the British flag flying side by side with the Egyptian. Cromer's annual reports from Cairo unrolled a wonderful record of peaceful achievements in every branch of the Egyptian administration and of growing prosperity throughout the Valley of the Nile. England's political ascendancy in Egypt still lacked international recognition, but foreign Powers recognized the value of her work there, and since the stormy episode of Fashoda even French hostility had abated. Turkish suzerainty had receded more and more into a shadowy background. The Khedive seemed to have taken to heart the lessons taught him during the first two years of his reign, and in Mustapha Pasha Fehmy Cromer had found as successor to Nubar an Egyptian Prime Minister upon whose loyal acceptance of

British guidance he was able to rely for the rest of his long term of office. His great authority throughout the Egyptian official world and amongst the foreign communities in Egypt, whether they welcomed or resented it, derived not merely from the position he held as the representative of Great Britain, but from his personal qualities of character. He had in a pre-eminent degree the sense of justice on which our race prides itself. He was convinced that the Egyptians were unfit to rule themselves and would probably remain so for a long time to come, but he was equally convinced that it was the duty of every Englishman to train them to rise on to a higher plane, and to treat them fairly, both individually and collectively. He tolerated no Englishman in the public services who tried to ride roughshod over them. One who had been guilty of a violent assault on an Egyptian subordinate was peremptorily dismissed and sent out of the country. An indefatigable worker himself, he gave his absolute confidence to the men who served him well, and full credit for the good work they did. He set before Englishmen and Egyptians alike an example of the highest standards of private as well as of public life. His establishment and his hospitality maintained the dignity of his office, but he eschewed any vulgar display of wealth or power, and though the tide of fashion had long swept past it, he continued to live in the modest house near the Ezbekieh in which he had taken up his residence in 1883. Universally respected, and a little feared even by those who knew him most intimately and had a deep affection for him, he was for Englishmen and foreigners the embodiment of all the best British qualities of mind and character on which our race chiefly prides itself and for which others are supposed chiefly to envy us. In the eyes of the Egyptians he stood for a mysterious force, unseen by most of them but everywhere felt and on the whole beneficent, and as soon as they heard something had happened to him that gave him the title of Lord in his own country, they too called him '*El-Lord*' – *the* Lord and nothing else. I was

sketching one day beyond the Pyramids, and talking to one of the young Pyramid Arabs who carried my paraphernalia, I pointed to the Great Pyramid which was alive with climbers, each with his appointed escort of Arabs and I asked him how his folk liked the new regulations under which they could no longer fight over the perspiring body of each tourist, and squeeze more and more *bakshish* out of him all the way up and down again. He replied with a shrug of the shoulders: '*El Lord a'ouz kidde.*' 'The Lord wishes it to be so.' 'Yes, but why does he wish it?' '*Istaf'r Allah,* God forbid that such as we should want to know: *El Lord a'rif.* That is enough.' Not '*Allah a'rif,*' which would have been a mere commonplace, but *el Lord a'rif* – '*the* Lord' knows best. That was in 1900, and the youth's words stuck in my memory as an unconscious expression of the popular attitude towards the superman who personified for the inarticulate masses the best of England's work in Egypt during the most fruitful period of British control.

CHAPTER IV

THE DECAY OF BRITISH INFLUENCE IN EGYPT

EVEN looking back now in the light of subsequent events I find it difficult to say exactly when the tide which had been flowing so strongly with us in Egypt during the first two decades of the British occupation began to turn. It had certainly already slackened when, after a few years' absence, I was there again in 1905. Cairo itself had grown more and more modern and cosmopolitan. The 'season' which was drawing to a close had been more brilliant than ever before, the Pyramids were hearing and seeing the rush of motors with more astonishment perhaps than they had felt even when Bonaparte pointed up to them and bade his soldiers remember that forty centuries were gazing down upon them. When I went up the Nile in one of the Cook's steamers which were hurrying hundreds of tourists up and down the river on which in the old days I had seen the leisurely *dahabieh* spread its lateen sails to the favouring breeze, or stick sometimes on sandbanks, the great Assuan dam, completed in 1902, stood athwart the first Cataract as the most pregnant and most enduring monument of the finest period of British control. With the material prosperity of the whole country the revenue was increasing by leaps and bounds, and not only the great Egyptian landowners but the humblest *fellaheen* had their share in it. If education was a field in which we could least boast of having achieved any conspicuous success, high schools and colleges conducted on Western lines, which in Egypt had always been French rather than English, showed an annually increasing output. The Entente of 1904 had healed the French soreness, and if the British status in Egypt was still anomalous, no foreign power was henceforth inclined to call it seriously into question. The Khedive was on his best behaviour, and having

been extremely well received in London in 1903 was preparing to pay another visit to King Edward. Clear as the whole atmosphere still seemed to be, yet there were already some signs of an approaching depression. None read them more clearly than Cromer who, if slightly ageing physically and looking forward to the time when he would have to lay down the reins, still retained his full vigour of intellect and work. I found him deeply engrossed in a difficult scheme which he was anxious to complete before his retirement for removing the abuses of the ancient system of foreign capitulations, and at the same time associating the large foreign communities settled in Egypt more closely with the political life of the country whose economic life he already so largely and in many ways rather selflessly controlled. But he was preoccupied also with the change which he saw coming over the general attitude of the Egyptian people towards British control – as yet a psychological rather than an outwardly manifest change. On the one hand there was growing up amongst the masses a generation that had never known, or barely remembered, the days of the Great Oppression from which England had rescued Egypt, and was more disposed to fret under the restraints which orderly methods of administration impose on Oriental peoples to whose traditions and habits minor irregularities of conduct and nepotism and corruption are not inherently repugnant. The more educated classes, on the other hand, had been touched, some by the breath of the Mohammedan reaction against the West which Abdul Hamid's Pan-Islamic propaganda had stirred throughout the Mohammedan world, and some by the spirit of racial revolt against white man's overlordship which was spreading amongst all the nations of the East. In Egypt both these currents met in the resurgence of a Nationalism superficially akin to that of Arabi's day, and already for some time past openly preached by a small knot of agitators on Egyptian platforms and in the Egyptian Press.

Cromer was not unduly alarmed at that change nor resentful

of it. But he recognized that it constituted a new factor in the Egyptian situation with which we were bound to reckon. He even understood and sympathized with its better aspects, and was at pains to retain or win the confidence of those who had learnt to recognize, as Arabi himself had, that England was carrying out in Egypt much of the work essential to her advancement as a nation, which the Nationalists of an earlier generation had confusedly contemplated but had been incompetent to carry into execution. Such was Sheikh Mohammed Abdu, a devout Mohammedan of exceptionally enlightened views, one of the few learned men of the ancient El-Azhar University who were anxious to find a synthesis between Islamic orthodoxy and modern civilization. He had been closely associated with Arabi and sentenced in consequence to internment, but after his release he had become a genuine and staunch convert to British control, of which he acknowledged the beneficent influence, whilst exercising his right to criticize such shortcomings as he saw in it. Cromer, who had a great personal regard for him, consulted him freely and gave him all the encouragement and support he could, and deeply deplored his premature death and the loss of his moderating counsels just when they were most needful. Another was Saad Zaghlul, whom I met at the British Agency not long before he was appointed, on Cromer's recommendation, to be Minister of Public Education and made his entry on to the political stage of Egypt, on which he was henceforth to play down to the present day a part of singular and growing importance, though not ultimately on the lines which Cromer himself had anticipated when in his own farewell speech two years later he singled him out for special praise and predicted for him a career of great public usefulness. 'He possesses,' Cromer said, 'all the qualities necessary to serve his country. He is honest, he is capable, he has the courage of his convictions, he has been abused by many of the less worthy of his fellow-countrymen. These are high qualifications, he should go far.' He has indeed gone

far, but if not by any means in the direction which Englishmen expected or desired, they should ask themselves whether he is alone to blame.

For a good many years after Cromer's retirement I only paid a few short visits to Egypt, mostly on my way to or from India, but they were long enough for me to note the rapidity with which the change which had set in even in Cromer's last years of office was proceeding under less wise or observant eyes than his. The quality of British control seemed to deteriorate almost as soon as his restraining hand was removed. He had always checked any unnecessary increase in the number of Englishmen employed in the Egyptian public services. When he was gone the tendency to create posts for Englishmen without much regard for the claims of educated Egyptians grew apace. It was not, perhaps, unnatural that English heads of departments should prefer to employ young Englishmen, whom they could easily break into their work, rather than young Egyptians who, whatever their intellectual qualifications, generally required more careful training and closer supervision. But it was a serious and dangerous departure from the principle on which Cromer had always sought to act, which had been, 'to limit the number of Europeans as much as possible, to employ Egyptians in a great majority of the subordinate and in a large number of the superior administrative posts, and gradually to prepare the ground for employing them further.' Increasing numbers did not make for increased efficiency, any more than the introduction of the motor-car, which did away with much of the old leisurely contact between British officials and the rural population. The atmosphere of Cairo continued to change, and not for the better. It was becoming a popular winter resort for the idle rich, Egyptians as well as foreigners. Huge and luxurious hotels catered for the growing taste for fashionable entertainments and gaieties. Social relations between Englishmen and Egyptians were less frequent and intimate. The Ghezireh Sports Club might almost have been labelled 'for

Europeans only,' and Egyptians, whose indispensable co-operation in creating it had at first been gratefully welcomed, were apt to find that their company was no longer wanted. A young Egyptian of good family and large means who had been educated at Oxford and who was afterwards deported with Zaghlul to Malta as a dangerous political agitator, told me with some bitterness that his English friends were still ready to ask for a lift to the Sports Club in his motor, but when they got there they were still more ready with excuses for not inviting him to join them in their games or at their tea-table. Not only did Englishmen in Egypt grow accustomed to treating the Egyptians as a subject race that was bound to acknowledge their superiority, but at home, too, it was popularly regarded as just one of Great Britain's many oversea possessions, and in many of our maps it was coloured 'all red' as an integral part of the British Empire.

Though the British Government's policy, on the other hand, was to relax the stringency of British control, and measures were passed in Sir Eldon Gorst's time for the promotion of local self-government, Egyptian unrest continued to increase. An irreconcilable Nationalist opposition had been heartened by the success of the Turkish revolution, and a frankly revolutionary party was prepared to borrow the methods even of Indian anarchism. I was in Egypt in 1910 when the trial took place of the men who had for the first time imported murder as a political weapon into Egypt, and killed the Egyptian Prime Minister, Boutros Pasha, in the streets of Cairo. Perhaps because he was a native Christian, his fate evoked little popular sympathy. When Gorst, who had long been a sick man in the grip of a mortal disease, was succeeded in his turn by Kitchener, the latter's immense prestige and familiarity from old times with the people of the country and with those especially who had served under him or known him as Sirdar, restored for a while the stability of British control, and the *fellaheen* welcomed the Five Feddan Law which he enacted for their benefit, whilst he sought to

propitiate the politically-minded classes by constitutional reforms of a distinctly liberal character. He had, however, all the defects of his great qualities, and, taciturn as he often was, he could often be guilty of the most blazing indiscretions. He was very keen to push on the schemes first conceived in Cromer's time for storing the waters of the Blue and White Nile in the Sudan. Whilst he undoubtedly had chiefly in view the material benefits which would accrue to Egypt as well as to the Sudan from the increased supply of irrigation, it was also in his mind that the control of the Nile in the Sudan would enable England if driven to it 'to twist the Egyptian's tail,' and he was so pleased with the phrase that he used it far too freely in a country where winged words are apt to become very soon public property. The Sudan reservoirs thus aroused from the very inception of the schemes the Egyptian suspicions which find expression to-day in the demand for the restoration of undivided Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan.

No sooner, too, had the Khedive Abbas been relieved of his wholesome fear of Cromer than his old appetite for arbitrary power and illicit wealth found vent once more in tortuous intrigues first with one party and then with another. Gorst had allowed the reins to slacken prematurely, and Kitchener's policy fluctuated between concessions to the Palace in matters which he deemed unessential, and sharp raps on the Khedivial knuckles when he thought Abbas was presuming too far. It was through these fluctuations that Zaghlul was first and very bitterly estranged from us as, in a strong stand which he was rightly making as Minister of Justice against the Khedive's encroachments, he believed that he had been unfairly thrown over by the British Agency after having received a promise of thorough-going support. Kitchener himself at last despaired of working with Abbas, and when he came to England on leave for a couple of months before the outbreak of the Great War he had definitely made up his mind that Abbas must have his

wings clipped once and for all – or go, as his father had gone in 1879.

The Great War was to throw Egypt, like the rest of the world, into a fiery crucible. The Egyptian Government in office at its outbreak stood loyally by England and acquiesced in the deposition of the Khedive, who was at Constantinople when the Great War broke out in August, 1914, and remained there even when Turkey entered into it as the ally of the Germanic Powers. The nominal ties which had continued to unite Egypt with the Ottoman Empire were rudely and irrevocably severed, but instead of annexation, which almost all Egyptians expected and would have understood, an ill-defined British Protectorate was proclaimed in deference mainly to the agreement between the Allies that no territorial changes were to be made during the war. When I passed through Egypt in January, 1915, on my way to India, the country was already a great British camp in which armed forces from different parts of the Empire were being concentrated and trained. Though Great Britain had declined the active co-operation of the Egyptian army which Egyptian Ministers had freely offered, a few small Egyptian units were lined up with Indian and British troops along the Suez Canal in anticipation of the threatened Turkish attack from Syria. Of the neutrality of the Canal in war as in peace which had been solemnly laid down in 1887 after long international negotiations, there was not the faintest trace. On my way home three months later the Turkish attack had taken place and been foiled, and whatever may have been at that time the secret sympathies of the Egyptian masses with their Turkish co-religionists, the slight effervescence produced amongst them at the first outbreak of hostilities had died away when hundreds of Turks marched through the streets of Cairo, not as conquerors but as prisoners of war. I already knew Prince Hussein, the third son of the former Khedive Ismail, whom we had placed on the throne as successor to Abbas and with the more exalted title of Sultan. He had

qualities of character which other members of the reigning dynasty badly lacked. All through the thirty years of British occupation he had held aloof from politics and lived the simple life of a landlord – and an excellent landlord – keenly interested in agriculture and in the development of his large estates, very popular with his tenants and universally respected. He was good enough to remember me, and I saw him frequently during my fortnight's stay in Cairo. He fully recognized the value of the work done by England in Egypt, for as a landlord he had seen some of its best sides, and as he lived mostly away from Cairo he had had less experience of some of its other and less agreeable aspects. He was devoted to his country, and if he did not disguise from me that he sometimes felt his own position unpleasantly galling and even insecure owing to the British Government's refusal to define the precise scope and character of the Protectorate, his chief preoccupation, he assured me, was as to the future of Egypt when the war was over. He had absolute faith in the ultimate triumph of British arms, but not, he admitted, in the ultimate purpose of British policy with regard to Egypt. He had a good deal of humour, and described quite good-naturedly the difference which he was often made to feel between the meaning which the British Resident seemed to attach to his title of Sultan, as if it were only the Egyptian equivalent of an Indian Maharajah, and his own Egyptian subjects' conception of what it had once stood for in some of the most glorious periods of Egyptian history. I drove out with him once, and whilst he was, as it seemed to me, respectfully greeted in the streets of the city we passed through, he was himself keenly alive to the indifference – *et pire que l'indifférence* – which the salutations of the townsmen failed to conceal from him, whereas he warmed at once to the smiling faces with which the *fellaheen* salaamed to him in one or two villages where he was well known to them. Courteous and kindly to all, though always with a great sense of dignity, he wore at times a look of peculiar sadness, which

perhaps foreshadowed the mental distress as well as the physical ailments that grew upon him afterwards. He died two and a half years later, and England as well as Egypt, perhaps for the first time, realized how great had been the service he had rendered both by accepting the burden of the Sultanate at so critical a juncture.

I was attached to the British Delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919 when the Egyptian rising took place. We had won the war. We had dictated the terms of peace, and amongst them was the recognition of the British Protectorate over Egypt. For the first time since 1882 our position in Egypt had been invested with international sanction. But by that time the confidence of the *fellaheen* in the beneficence of British control had gone and been turned into hatred by the hardships to which they had been subjected in breach of British promises that Egypt would not be made to bear any of the burdens of the war. The worst mischief had been done during the last two years of the war when Egypt became the base for the large British Expeditionary Forces operating against the Turk in Syria. The clash between the idealism of a war for freedom and its harsh realities was disastrous. It was Egypt that had to provide their main supplies. The Egyptian landlords and merchants were enriched by the huge payments made for them, but for the Egyptian masses the main result was an enormous rise in the cost of all the necessaries of life, and with the increasing exigencies of the campaign, it was Egypt that had to furnish almost the whole of the Labour and Transport Corps required for the construction of the military railways across the desert and for the maintenance of a steady stream of supplies to the Syrian front. Camels, horses, donkeys were requisitioned with less and less regard for the needs of the population. The military authorities wanted results and cared less and less about the methods or the agencies employed to obtain them, and both agencies and methods deteriorated rapidly, for a large proportion of British officials in Egypt had

gone to the front or were employed on other war work and there was no one left to control the proceedings of the not very reputable Levantines and subordinate Egyptian officials who filled their pockets and paid off old grudges whilst earning credit for the results of their zeal. Whole villages fled before the menace of these new forms of conscription, just as their grandfathers had fled from the old and not dissimilar forms of conscription under the Khedive Ismail. These memories were still quite fresh when on the morrow of the Armistice Zaghlul came out as the spokesman of the extreme Nationalist party who had remained quiescent during the war, and demanded complete independence for Egyptians, the fulfilment of the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination, and of the Allied statesmen's pledge that the war was waged for the freedom of all nations, great and small. Their raging and tearing propaganda spread like wildfire through the country-side as well as in the towns, though it was in Cairo and in Alexandria that it at first assumed the most turbulent shape. But British Ministers were too busy to give heed – too busy, they declared, even to receive the Egyptian Ministers who wanted to come over to London and explain how grave the situation had grown. Sir Reginald Wingate, the High Commissioner who had been sent for to London, could get no hearing. The sequel is well known. The British authorities in Cairo arrested Zaghlul in March, 1919, with four other prominent leaders of his party, and deported them to Malta. Then the storm burst, first of all in Cairo on March 14, and almost simultaneously throughout the Valley of the Nile as far up as Assuan. There were murderous assaults on small parties of British troops and even civilians, trains were derailed, and the railway lines over long stretches, as well as telegraphs and telephones and Government buildings, were destroyed wholesale by mobs of *fellaheen* who had hastily armed themselves with heavy clubs and any other primitive weapon ready to hand. For a few days all communications except by aeroplane were interrupted between Cairo and the outer world.

It was a rude awakening for British Ministers, and those who were with us in Paris could not conceal their bewilderment and dismay. Even Mr. Lloyd George's optimism was shaken. But the *deus ex machina* – the strong man on whom when in distress the most democratic ministers hasten to fall back – appeared in the nick of time on the scene. General Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Syria as well as Egypt, had been summoned for consultation with the Peace Conference on the situation in Syria rather than in Egypt. This was clearly the finger of Providence, and he was sent back at once to Cairo as Acting High Commissioner to put things straight. Though almost before he reached Cairo the violent outbreak had been sternly suppressed, he soon gave British Ministers their *quart d'heure de Rabelais* by insisting on the release of the deportees in Malta, whence they were shipped to Europe and left free to proceed to Paris. This was to be a first step towards appeasement, but appeasement was slow to come. The period of active rebellion was over, but it was still to be followed by a longer period of passive rebellion in the form of strikes, which extended even to the public offices and the law courts in Cairo. For nearly two months no Egyptian could be found willing to form a Ministry, till one of Abbas' old gang, Mohammed Said Pasha, accepted. No one, however, trusted him.

When I went out to Egypt in the early autumn a furious agitation was again being carried on against the Protectorate. There were frequent strikes and constant threats of strikes, political rather than industrial. Almost every day the streets of Cairo were thronged with noisy processions of fervent Nationalists, black-coated townsmen and village delegations in long blue *galoubiehs*, students from El Azhar and from the Government colleges, school-boys of all ages, and even women, and of all classes, from the veiled ladies who got their marching orders at Madame Zaghlul's house, which was called 'the House of the Nation,' to the bare- and brazen-faced hussies of the more disreputable quarters. Generally

these demonstrations ended harmlessly after they had shouted themselves hoarse with: 'Down with the Protectorate!' 'Complete independence!' 'Away with the English!' 'Give us back Zaghlul!' But they also led not infrequently to serious rioting, and sometimes British troops had to be called out to stiffen the Egyptian police, and then if there were casualties amongst the mob, the funeral of the 'martyrs' served as a pretext for fresh displays of patriotic indignation. Bombs began to be thrown in the streets, but fortunately with no success, at Ministers who were suspected of being friendly to England. Some of my Egyptian friends only ventured to come and see me after dark, but even those who were most anxious to see a return to orderly conditions and friendly relations with England insisted that there could be no peace so long as the Protectorate was maintained. Even the Arabic word for Protectorate had been so clumsily chosen that it stank in every Egyptian's nostrils. The British Government had indeed at last realized that there was something wrong, and very seriously wrong, in the state of Egypt. But Lord Milner's Commission of Inquiry, belatedly appointed and still more belatedly despatched, did not land in Egypt till December. It was a strong Commission, and its terms of reference were very wide. Milner had done admirable work in Egypt in the early years of the British occupation, and he was at that time not only a member of Mr. Lloyd George's Cabinet but a member of the inner War Cabinet; and no less well known in Egypt were, amongst the other members, Sir Rennel Rodd, a distinguished diplomatist who had served for many years under Lord Cromer in Cairo, and General Sir John Maxwell, who had won the esteem of Egyptians of all classes whilst he commanded the British forces in Egypt before as well as during the first years of the war. But by the time they had arrived, the Nationalists had added 'Down with the Commission!' to their popular battle-cries, a Nationalist boycott of the Commission having been proclaimed by Zaghlul, who was conducting the Extremist plan of campaign from his

headquarters in Paris scarcely less effectively than if he had been allowed to return to Egypt. Even the Prime Minister resigned rather than be a party to any official recognition of the Commission.

I already knew most of the members of the Commission, but as I was engaged in writing for *The Times* a series of articles on the Egyptian situation, I did not see much of them till just before I went home in March, 1920. They had by that time nearly completed their labours, rendered none the more easy by the 'national boycott,' which was sometimes enforced with threats of personal violence against the members who ventured to carry their inquiries into the provinces. Milner asked me to make an informal statement to them at one of their last sittings in Egypt. Not, however, till their Report was published did I realize how very closely my conclusions with regard to the genesis of the Egyptian troubles tallied with theirs, whilst the remedies they recommended were conceived on the same lines as those I had suggested, and even went further than I had in recommending not only the abolition of the Protectorate, but the substitution for it of a Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and Egypt, by which Egypt would receive full recognition of her independence, and Great Britain, on the other hand, the guarantees she was entitled to demand for her special interests and for the rights of the foreign communities settled in the country.

The clock could not be put back to the days of Lord Cromer and of his vigilant control over every department of the Egyptian administration; for the event had long ago shown that Cromerism without a Cromer was a snare and a delusion. What I felt as strongly as Milner and all his colleagues was that the most crying need was to restore the confidence in the sincerity and honesty of British professions which the war had rudely shaken amongst the Egyptian masses as well as amongst the governing classes. The Milner Commission believed, as I did, that the breach was not yet irreparable. Its Report supplied a bridge. There were amicable

conversations between Milner and Zaghlul, first in Paris and then in London, when the visit that the veteran agitator hastened to pay to Lord Cromer's widow showed how warm was still his recollection of the great statesman who had trusted and befriended him in the old days. Zaghlul was stubborn but not yet quite irreconcilable. On the basis of an exchange of views between him and Milner the Commission's Report was finally drawn up and presented to the British Cabinet. It was published in London and in Cairo. Adly Pasha was actually encouraged to form a Cabinet there and then come over to England for the purpose of negotiating the Treaty by which effect was to be given to its recommendations. I saw Adly on his arrival in London, full of hope and of good-will. I saw him repeatedly during his stay, and I saw his hopefulness and his good-will steadily estranged. There were endless delays. For a long time Mr. Lloyd George could not find a moment to see him, and when he at last received him in Downing Street, he took the Egyptian Prime Minister who had come over to negotiate for the recognition of Egypt as a sovereign and independent State, into the room in which the Imperial Conference had sat, and pointed to a chair which was, he said, being reserved for Egypt in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Well might Adly, as he was walking away, ask bitterly whether the British Prime Minister had ever heard of the Milner Commission. Mr. Lloyd George may perhaps never have read its Report, but Mr. Winston Churchill, who was Secretary of State for War, had evidently read it and was determined to wreck it. For when at long last negotiations were opened between Adly and Curzon, who was then at the Foreign Office, they broke down over the question of the British Army of Occupation, in regard to which the British Government claimed to reserve for itself far wider powers than had ever been exercised before the war. Adly went back empty-handed to Egypt, and was soon driven to resign by a British note, drafted in the Prime Minister's office, but reluctantly signed by Curzon as Foreign

Secretary, in which not a trace survived of the liberal spirit of the Milner Report. It was a return to the principle of force almost as naked as in war time, and the results were much the same, only on a smaller scale. More riots, more deportations – until Lord Allenby, with the British officials who were still termed 'Advisers to the Egyptian Government,' warned the Cabinet that its policy would mean a helpless deadlock, or large British reinforcements to compel submission. He even came over to press his point by threatening to resign. The appearance of the 'strong man' was not welcomed quite so warmly on this occasion as it had been when the Egyptian rising had so rudely disturbed the Paris Peace Conference, but he had his way, and Mr. Lloyd George, quickly boxing the compass, made his famous Declaration of February 28, 1922, by which the independence as a sovereign Kingdom of Egypt was formally recognized, but without the *quid pro quo* for which the Milner Commission would have provided in a bi-lateral Treaty. All that Lloyd George could do was to reserve the four points which were to safeguard British interests in Egypt and the Sudan as well as those of foreign communities 'for future consultation and amicable settlement' between the British and Egyptian Governments. Consultations with Zaghlul took place when Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was Prime Minister, but led to no 'amicable settlement.' Lord Allenby had even to launch a very stiff, if not altogether wise, ultimatum when the Sirdar and Governor-General of the Sudan was brutally murdered in the streets of Cairo. An amicable settlement is yet to seek in regard both to Egypt and the Sudan. Fuad, the youngest son of the Khedive Ismail, whom we put on the throne as Sultan after his brother Hussein's death in 1917 because, according to one explanation given to me, 'he had no friends in the country and would therefore have to rely entirely on our support,' reigns over Egypt as a constitutional king, but is reputed to have all the despotic instincts of his more masterful forbears, without their better qualities, whilst Zaghlul

presides over the Egyptian Chamber, which successive elections never fail to fill with a huge majority of his supporters. Lord Lloyd, with a fine record of diplomatic and administrative experience already gained in the East, has succeeded Lord Allenby at the British Residency and still retains the title of His Britannic Majesty's High Commissioner of Egypt. Immense as have been the changes I have witnessed since I first went there over fifty years ago, Egypt remains the land of paradox. For nothing can be more paradoxical than its present state of unstable equilibrium, oscillating uneasily between a nation impatient of any foreign control but unwilling to exchange the very little there is left of effective British control to-day for the doubtful mercies of a lesser Ismail; and a British Government which, whether Coalition or Labour or Conservative, has failed hitherto to discover even a formula to reconcile the proclaimed independence of Egypt with the four essential points reserved by Mr. Lloyd George, and yet can neither go back on the former nor abandon the latter. Egypt is to-day far more truly than in the days of Ismail 'a bit of Europe in Africa,' but it is still part of the East, and of an East that has grown far more intolerant of every form of European tutelage.

CHAPTER V

SYRIA IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES

When I went on from Egypt to Syria in 1879 Disraeli's magic wand had cast an even greater, though far less enduring, spell over that province, by the British occupation of Cyprus, than it had over Egypt by the purchase of Ismail's Suez Canal shares when I first went to Cairo in 1876. Whilst Egypt was an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire in which the dynasty and the ruling caste were of Turkish origin but had no love for Constantinople, Syria, with a population which, however mixed, was on the whole of a purer Arab type than the Egyptians, was directly ruled, or misruled, from Constantinople. All the highest officials were Turks appointed and sent from Constantinople, many of whom knew not a word of Arabic and were mere birds of passage, and generally also birds of prey. There was as yet no glimmering of a political Nationalism in Syria and of all the many lines of cleavage between her peoples, the deepest was between Mohammedans and Christians, but they all in varying degrees hated the Turk as an alien conqueror who had built up his Empire on the ruins of a far nobler and more ancient Arab civilization. The Turk, whom the great Pasha of Egypt, Mohammed Ali, had twice chased out of Syria in the first half of the nineteenth century, was once more in a very bad way. Disraeli had indeed called a halt to the Russian armies at the gates of Constantinople by sending the fleet through the Dardanelles and ordering Indian troops to Malta in anticipation of an armed conflict with Russia, and he had got better terms for Turkey at the Berlin Congress than she had been forced to accept under the Treaty of San Stefano, but in return for his support he had secured a respectable *quid pro quo* which set the whole of Syria agog.

The large island of Cyprus lies so near to Syria that from the higher slopes of Lebanon its hilly profile can sometimes

be seen silhouetted on a clear evening against the Western sky. Cyprus was already occupied by a British army. Might it not be merely a stepping-stone to Syria? Tongues began to wag still more freely when Midhat Pasha was appointed Vali or Governor-General at Damascus. For during the volcanic period at Constantinople, when violent Palace conspiracies ended by placing Abdul Hamid on the throne, Midhat had been prominent amongst the Turkish 'reformers' as the author of the famous Turkish constitution which was to put an end to the arbitrary despotism of the Ottoman Sultanate. As a 'Liberal' statesman he enjoyed the support of the British Ambassador, Sir Henry Layard, and of the British Cabinet at home, who, under Disraeli's inspiration, still tried to persuade themselves that the Turk could change his spots. His appointment was at once ascribed to British influence, for it then never occurred to Syrians that anything could be done at Constantinople except at either British or Russian instigation. Least of all could they divine that the young Sultan, who had already suspended the Constitution, was merely sending its author into honourable exile as Vali of Damascus pending still more signal marks of the Imperial disfavour, which were to end with a cup of coffee administered to him a few years later in a remote place of internment in Arabia. Midhat himself cannot at that time have fully gauged his Imperial master's character, for on his arrival in Syria he began rather unwisely to bear himself as if he were no common Vali and to assume the airs of a Viceroy, which, in view of Turkey's experience with the Egyptian Viceroyalty, was bound to excite suspicion at Constantinople. Nor did Layard's demonstrative visit to his protégé tend to dispel the expectations which Syrian wiseacres had built upon further developments of Disraeli's adventurous Eastern policy. Midhat himself was scarcely cut out to play the part of the Man of Destiny. I saw him several times whilst he was in Syria, but though his brain was far more alert than that of most Turkish statesmen of that period and he talked very

plausibly and perhaps sincerely of the great reforms and of a new era for Turkey, he was evidently already past his prime, and there was probably some truth in the common report that he had taken to drinking rather often and heavily – a failing not so unusual among high Turkish officials as the strict inhibitions of the Koran might lead one to expect. He took more pains than any Turkish Vali had ever done before to make himself popular with the Syrians, and by the curious irony of things he picked out as his confidants some of the most intelligent of the younger generation, who afterwards, instead of becoming the pillars of an Ottoman reform party, placed their undoubted talent at the service of Abdul Hamid's most reactionary methods of government.

But if British designs on Syria were merely the figment of Syrian imagination stirred by the occupation of Cyprus, there was a corner of Syria in which British influence was firmly entrenched, viz. in the Lebanon. Since the troubles which had broken out in the Lebanon in 1860 and led to foreign intervention, it had enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, guaranteed by treaty and placed under the effective control of England and France. One might have read into the Organic Statute imposed by the Powers something of the status nowadays of a mandated territory under the League of Nations. Its Governor was formally appointed by the Sultan, but on the recommendation of the Powers, and he happened then to represent a peculiar type of Turkish official which has long since almost entirely disappeared, first with the growth of Hamidian Pan-Islamism, and then of Young-Turkish Nationalism. Rustem Pasha, afterwards Ottoman Ambassador in London, wore the fez and single-breasted black frock-coat which constituted the ordinary uniform of a Turkish official, but little else about him was Turkish. He came of a distinguished Italian family and he had had an excellent and entirely Western education, French rather than Italian, whilst he had studied English history and was a warm admirer of British political institutions. He

had chanced to drift into the Turkish service at a time when there were statesmen like Ali and Fuad Pasha at the Sublime Porte, who realized the importance of giving Turkey at least a veneer of Western civilization, the Sultan himself, for instance, dropping his Asiatic title in the Treaty of Paris and others, and substituting for it the more Western-sounding title of 'Emperor of the Ottomans.' In the Turkish Diplomatic Service, and even occasionally in the highest offices of the Sublime Porte, there were not a few Turkish officials who, if not actually, like Rustem, of foreign birth, were members of Christian subject races whose training and mentality were, as far as the limitations of Turkish officialdom permitted, often almost equally Western. As Governor of the Lebanon, Rustem was in the exceptionally happy position of scarcely having to reckon with the more disagreeable realities of Turkish public life. Certain appearances, no doubt, had to be safeguarded in his relations with Constantinople, but it was to England and to France that he had to look for guidance and support in ruling the Lebanon, and at that time to England rather than to France, whose prestige in the Levant had not yet recovered from the disasters of 1870. England had then a representative in Syria, G. J. Eldridge, well qualified by his long tenure of his post as Consul-General at Beirut to discharge the quasi-mandatory duties with which he was entrusted in the Lebanon. He had too much tact to comport himself as an 'uncrowned King,' though his authority did not fall far short of it. He had had a remarkable career. A tutor in a Russian private family in Southern Russia when the Crimean War broke out, he stayed on for the first year until all British subjects were given their passports. On his arrival in England he wrote an article in *Blackwood* on war conditions in Russia which attracted Lord Palmerston's attention. Attached almost immediately as interpreter to British headquarters at Sebastopol, he was brought after its surrender into close contact with the Russian Admiral, with whom he got on so well both in his private and public capacity that

he married his daughter the year after the peace, when he at once joined the British Consular Service and was promoted within a few years to Beirut, then the most important post politically in the Turkish Levant. Owing to the kind and prolonged hospitality which he and his family extended to me – even to nursing me through a very severe illness – I had many opportunities of seeing him at work.

His influence was naturally greatest with the Druses, whom Lord Dufferin had saved from destruction when Turkey was as usual ready to sacrifice her tools in order to placate the European Powers after the grave disturbances of 1860. Chance furnished me with an opportunity of realizing that it was no mere Oriental hyperbole when they assured him that his word was law to them. The old fires of religious and racial hatred continued still to burn beneath the surface, and on one occasion the danger of an outbreak seemed so imminent that, in default at the moment of any better messenger, Eldridge asked me to ride as fast as one of his horses could carry me to the Druses' headquarters in Mount Hermon and deliver a confidential message to one of the chiefs whom he specially trusted. It was a very long day's ride, and in the course of it even my inexperienced eye could not fail to note unmistakable signs of trouble amongst the mountaineers. Bands of sturdy young fellows with their guns strapped over their shoulders were hurrying in the same direction as I was. The older men and women and children clustered together in the rare villages, some asking me eagerly for news as I rode through, some dispersing hastily with furtive glances at the approach of a stranger, but all with the suppressed air of excitement peculiar to a period of anxious expectancy. Night had fallen before I reached my destination, and my horse was even more exhausted than its rider when we clambered up the last rocky mountain track which by no stretch of courtesy could be called a road. But there again were signs that something was afoot. In normal times the whole village would have been asleep, but there were lights

still burning in some of the houses and I had little trouble in finding a guide to take me to the house I was in search of. That of a Druse chief was wont to be his castle, and admittance at such an unusual hour to be granted after a long parley. But the mere statement that I had come with a message from the British Consul-General was a sufficient Open Sesame. My message was short and easily delivered. It was to the effect that the Druses were on no account to stir or give the slightest provocation to their enemies, and that they might rely upon the British Consul-General's word – the word of an Englishman – that the particular grievances which had produced this crisis would be redressed. A few other chiefs were brought in to hear me repeat my message, and finally I was conducted into a still more private apartment where I had to repeat it to a dignified old lady who, having herself been through and suffered greatly during the troubles of 1860, was held to have inherited from those days all the wisdom born of bitter experience. The menace under which the Druses were then living affected their fellow-tribesmen under direct Turkish rule in the Hauran rather than those of the Mountain itself. But the old lady knew that the Druse people had to stand or fall together, and when I had spoken, she turned to the chiefs who had gathered round her, some from the Hauran itself, and all of a somewhat younger generation, and put to them one single question: 'Do you trust more to the Englishman's word than you dread to Turk?' And with one voice they bowed low before her, touching breast and lips and forehead: 'Wallahi. We trust the Englishman's word, and having it we need dread no Turk.' She then begged me to go back and describe what I had seen and tell what I had heard. An abundant supper, which I felt already to be long overdue, was awaiting me when I returned to the chief guest-room, where a bed of warm rugs and soft cushions was soon spread for me, and the next day I rode back. The news had clearly spread all along the country-side with that extraordinary rapidity with which news is

conveyed by word of mouth all over the East. The villages and villagers had resumed their tranquil appearance, and instead of avoiding me, many men turned out to salute me as I passed and some of the women wanted to anoint my hands with rose-water. Eldridge expressed himself highly satisfied and relieved when I reported the result of my errand, and a telegram to the Vali of Damascus consummated the mission of peace, which in those days required as its only sanction the word of an Englishman.

I spent upwards of a year travelling about the highways and byways of Syria; in Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon; amongst the ruins of early Christian Syria towards the gates of Cilicia, where I took refuge on a winter's night with the snow thick on the ground in the ruins of the basilica of St. Simeon Stylites, and slept with Kurdish shepherds and their flocks at the foot of the great pillar on which, fifteen centuries ago, he had stood and preached and mortified the flesh for twenty years; I crossed the Jordan into the Mountains of Moab, now part of Trans-Jordania, one of the Mandated Territories committed to Great Britain, but then a No-Man's Land in which the writ of a rascally mongrel Beduin chief ran much further than the Sultan's, but could be bought for a trifling consideration; I saw, too, the desolate city of Palmyra, whence a Roman legionary once brought a wife to die and be buried under the Roman wall, as her tombstone, preserved at Corstopitum, attests to the present day; I penetrated a little way into the Syrian desert, where I got to know the real Bedu at his best with the great Anezeh tribe; and I wandered into other then untravelled regions, in which the modern tourist makes the welkin ring with his ubiquitous motor-horn. Lady Hester Stanhope was already a memory of the past, but there was still to be seen in Damascus the scarcely less picturesque figure of a great English lady who had crowned the adventures of an eccentric and stormy life by wedding a Beduin chief. Mrs. Digby, as I knew her, had been a famous London beauty when George IV was King, and had married the first Lord

Ellenborough, afterwards Governor-General of India, and been divorced by him before she was twenty-three. For more than twenty years her name figured conspicuously in the *chroniques scandaleuses* of not a few European Courts, and then, having drifted in the early autumn of her life to Syria, she journeyed to Palmyra and lost her heart for the last time to the handsome young Sheikh Midjwel, who provided the necessary escort for her journey. She never left Syria. As long as she could ride a horse or a camel she accompanied her husband into the desert during the annual migrations of his tribe, who called her *Umm-el-Laban*, or the Mother of Milk, from the milky whiteness of her skin. But in the summer she resided in Damascus in an attractive house built partly in the European and partly in the Arab style. As she advanced in years she had to renounce her desert wanderings, and she resumed more and more in her quiet Damascus home the life and pursuits of a refined Englishwoman, and became even the most regular of attendants at the local Church of England services. When I made her acquaintance she must have been getting on for eighty, but so long as her Turkish yashmak concealed the lower part of her face, her ivory white and almost unwrinkled brow, her luminous eyes and the fine line of her aquiline nose still preserved traces of the beauty which had captured so many hearts in many lands and in the highest places. Not only was she well read, but the world had been to her a strangely interesting book, of which she still seemed to enjoy turning over many of the old pages with a disarming simplicity, as if they belonged not to her own but to some one else's life. She had also a keen sense of humour, and when I once suggested that she ought to write her Memoirs, she replied with a chuckle that she was afraid they would be 'a very naughty edition of the *Almanach de Gotha*,' and then added rather primly that a prayer-book was more suitable to her declining years. Happier than Lady Hester Stanhope, with whom she would sometimes, very inaccurately, compare herself, her old age in Syria brought her tempestuous

life to a peaceful close which, if it could hardly be called commonplace, was singularly calm and serene.

Far less interesting, except for one absolutely unique experience in any Englishman's life, was a robust old Scotsman who, during the Egyptian occupation of Mecca, after Ibrahim Pasha had crushed the Wahabis in the early part of the century, had enjoyed the singular distinction of feeding the Egyptian garrison as head of their commissariat department in the most sacred city of Islam. At that time he, of course, professed Mohammedanism, but at the end of his Egyptian career, whilst preserving his Mohammedan name and Egyptian title, he had reverted to Christianity and come to live quite inconspicuously just outside Beirut, where few were aware of his earlier career. Nor did he care to be reminded of it. A far more remarkable man who was then spending in Palestine the last few years of an extraordinarily varied life was Laurence Oliphant. His finely-shaped head and long flowing beard, and tall, slightly stooping figure no one was likely to forget, and I had not forgotten them since the day when during the Paris Commune he stepped up to me on the Place Vendôme just after the column had been pulled down and told me roughly but kindly that it was not the place nor the time for a red-haired English boy to be out sightseeing. I had grown in the meantime to my years and had changed a good deal, but when I went up to him and recalled our last meeting he at once remembered it. He shook me warmly by the hand and told me later on that after our meeting during the Commune he had tried to find out who I was and had always felt certain that he would come across me again. It was my good fortune to see much of him afterwards in Syria, and the influence which he had upon me, though difficult to describe, proved to be one of the strongest and best that I ever came under. He fascinated me as no one else I have ever known. He had been everything in turn, and might have excelled in anything but for a curious waywardness which was not due to lack of perseverance or

earnestness but to a deep-seated faith in an inner voice that was constantly calling on him to strike out some new line of endeavour. As a young man he had freely indulged a natural taste for adventure. In the Crimean War he had served with a corps of Turkish irregulars raised under British officers to stir up a rebellion against Russia in the Caucasus. He had accompanied Lord Elgin on his mission to China. He had thrown himself heart and soul into the Italian fight for freedom and unity and had worn a red shirt in Genoa, when Garibaldi's 'thousand' set out to drive King Bomba out of Sicily and Naples. Then he returned to England to enter for a few years on the more commonplace life, as he called it, of a Liberal member of Parliament and a brilliant member of London society. He brought that chapter to a sensational close when 'the voice' called him to America. His Parthian shot for the London world which he was casting away from him was the brilliant story *Piccadilly*, a not altogether unkindly satire in which he made fun chiefly of three different classes of society – the wholely holy, the worldly holy, and the wholely worldly. How a man of his acute intelligence and refinement should ever have listened to the 'voice' which called him to America is one of those riddles of the human soul which those who knew him best were least able to solve. Harris, through whom the voice had on that occasion spoken to him, had founded a religious sect of which the chief features were a return to primitive conditions of life and social communism. Oliphant once compared the years spent in those surroundings, physical and moral, to a penitential hair shirt which he had worn to cure him of his 'wholely worldliness.' Even before his final hour of disillusionment another 'voice' called him back with equal urgency to Europe. Shortly afterwards the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and, stirred by his old spirit of adventure, he got to the front as a special correspondent of *The Times* with the German Armies, and after the war was over he remained in Paris as its correspondent during the Commune, when I first met him. He had no

liking for journalism in peace time. So, having discovered Blowitz and recommended him to Printing House Square as a man who was a born journalist and might go far, he settled down again just long enough to win the gracious and beautiful young wife who worshipped him so selflessly that she followed him to America soon after their marriage when the 'voice' called him back there, once more speaking through Harris, and she shared with him the weird rule of life, harder even for a woman than for a man, which Harris imposed upon his disciples. Whether the final disillusionment came first to her or to her husband there is nothing to show. But that cruel experience, though it heavily crippled her modest fortune as well as his, did not impair their intense affection for each other. They came back to London and he took to writing for a livelihood as well as for pleasure. None of his books ever achieved the quality or the success of *Piccadilly*, and he soon became a greater social favourite than ever, and nowhere more welcome than at Marlborough House. One of his many recollections of that period was a dinner with the then Prince and Princess of Wales, where the conversation happened to turn upon the place of origin of some very fine oranges that were being handed round the table. Oliphant spoke with great authority and declared them to be Californian. The Princess, surprised at hearing him speak as an expert, asked where he had learned all about oranges. She was a good deal more surprised when he replied, 'Oh, a few years ago I spent three months selling oranges on a railway platform in California.' And her surprise, he told me, became absolute amazement when, on being asked why he had done that, he said he had done it in order to keep his pride down. The Prince, however, burst out laughing. 'I can get that done for me,' he remarked, 'without going all the way to California. I've only got to step across to Buckingham Palace!'

There were two sides, and even more, to Oliphant's extraordinary personality. He could, or believed he could, look far into the future, and at the same time he loved to live in

the past, for which he had a profound reverence. But strongest of all was his faith in a super-world with which he believed himself to be constantly in contact. He rebelled against dogmatic orthodoxy of every kind, and he could be bitterly sarcastic over the feuds of the various sects of Christendom, and not least of Eastern Christendom, where the rivals were only prevented by Turkish troops standing at arms within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, from rushing at each others' throats for the Holy Fire sent down on Easter Eve, whenever the great festival happened to be celebrated on the same date by the different Christian communities. Christ was, however, none the less for him the only teacher through whom the Spirit of God had breathed upon the world, and he practised quite unostentatiously the Christian virtues, of which charity was for him also the greatest.

For the squalid Jewish population lamenting and beating their heads against the long wall of the Temple, on the site of which the Arab conquerors erected one of the greatest of Mohammedan shrines, he had more pity than contempt. Long before Zionism in its later form had been thought of, he encouraged and assisted Rothschild and a few other leading Jews in their philanthropic schemes for reclaiming the Jews of Palestine to more wholesome ways of life by starting Jewish agricultural colonies. It was through him that the Turkish Government was first approached for permission to buy land and settle Jewish families in Palestine.

To Haiffa he was attracted by a colony of simple German folk who had gone forth to make their homes in Palestine in expectation of the second advent of Christ. They were clean-living, industrious and frugal people, setting wholesome standards of life before the mixed community of Mohammedans and Christians and Jews who made up the bulk of the population in the pleasantly situated town at the foot of Mount Carmel. They in turn appreciated his kindly tolerance of their peculiar religious tenets and gladly lent him a helping hand in building a small house on the higher slopes of Carmel,

in which he had decided to spend the rest of his life. So great was his influence and that of his wife upon all sorts and conditions of men and women that his house became the resort of pilgrims of all sects – mostly of the humbler classes – who came from far and near to implore help and ask for their advice, sometimes in regard to public grievances and far more often in family troubles and domestic difficulties. They could always be trusted to find some wise remedy as unfailing peacemakers. The Turkish authorities themselves learnt to reckon with them, for they were naturally credited with that measure of madness which is deemed throughout the East to derive from God. Laurence Oliphant continued to write when the spirit moved him, but the inspiration seemed to come to him now almost entirely from his wife, who retained much of the Madonna-like beauty of her youth with an added tinge of sadness and compassion. In her faith there was a strong vein of mysticism as in his, and never, he told me, were their two souls in closer communion than in their home on Mount Carmel when, to borrow his words, he emptied his own soul for hers to enter into full possession of it, whilst she breathed into him all the thoughts and the very words of the strange volume *Sympneumata*, the last of the long and singularly varied series of books published for him by his old friend William Blackwood, who confessed to me afterwards that he had been quite unable to understand it. For those who knew Laurence Oliphant, it was often difficult to understand him, but it was still more difficult not to love him. It was on his advice that I went from Syria to Constantinople. He had been spending the summer there, and long before most Englishmen he had come to the conclusion that Sultan Abdul Hamid, in spite of the disasters with which his reign had opened, was going to make a bigger mark in history, for better or for worse, than any of his predecessors since the decline of the Ottoman Empire. 'He has the brains and the cunning of his Armenian father' (for Abdul Hamid was said to be the son of an Armenian gardener

who had somehow found favour in the eyes of the Valideh Sultana), 'and he has the same faith in his star as the founder of his dynasty. When he was still a boy a *fakir* who could read the stars told him that the star under which he was born was that of the exalted Caliphate of Islam, which he would some day restore to its ancient splendour. Hence he has built himself a new palace which he has called Yeldiz Kiosk, or the Hall of the Star, and it is a star that will be worth watching.'

CHAPTER VI

TURKEY UNDER ABDUL HAMID, SULTAN AND CALIPH

I FOLLOWED Laurence Oliphant's advice and went to Constantinople where, incidentally, I served a short but useful apprenticeship in journalism with the *Levant Herald*, then the leading English newspaper in the Near East, of which his friend Edgar Whitaker was the proprietor. In the course of the two years 1880–1881 I then spent in Turkey, two things happened that were fraught with big consequence, not only for Turkey but for a large part of the world before and during, and even after, the Great War. One was the first step taken by Abdul Hamid in the development of his Pan-Islamic policy; the other was the beginning of German penetration into Turkey with the arrival of a German military mission to reorganize the Turkish army.

The Imperial rescript in which Abdul Hamid announced his appointment of the Tunisian Khair-ed-Din as Grand Vizier boldly asserted his right as Caliph to choose his servants wherever he thought fit within the world of Islam, non-Turkish as well as Turkish. It was a definite breach, too, with the old traditions of Stambul, and with the monopoly of power which the Turkish bureaucracy, disguised at its centre under the dignified name of the Sublime Porte, had enjoyed for centuries past, and never more completely than under his immediate predecessors. There was more than a mere flutter in the official dovecots and in the *Yalis* on the Bosporus in which Turkish statesmen momentarily out of office were wont to spend periods of patient and not unpleasant retirement, in the full confidence that under some unwritten law of rotation it would be their turn again before very long to enjoy the flesh pots. The consternation was general, but not many had as much perspicacity as a young Turkish 'reformer' to whom Midhat Pasha had given me a letter of

introduction. He had read into the Tunisian's appointment its full meaning, and was the first who freely interpreted it to me. Abdul Hamid owed his accession to the throne to a series of palace conspiracies, which had cost Abdul Aziz his life and then sent Murad into a mad-house. He had already cast off the constitutional fetters by which Midhat and the Turkish reform party sought to restrain the despotic character of the Sultanate. He was equally determined to free himself from the bondage of the ruling caste of Stambul. The appointment of a non-Turkish Grand Vizier proved a first step towards the establishment of a system of absolute and personal government centred at Yeldiz Kiosk, of which the favourite instruments were to be for the most part not Turks – not even always Mohammedans – but, whatever they were, always and above all submissive to his sovereign will and solely dependent upon his favours.

But to fulfil the *fakir's* prophecy Abdul Hamid had not only to restore the power of the Sultanate within his dominions but also to revive the splendour of the Caliphate throughout Islam. Mohammedans themselves have long disputed as to the exact nature of the authority vested in the Caliphate, and the title had usually sat lightly on the shoulders of Abdul Hamid's predecessors. The Ottoman Sultan's claim to it had, however, been once more specifically asserted in the 'Reform' Constitution of 1876, and that was the only clause that Abdul did not repudiate when, feeling himself firmer in the saddle, he suspended an instrument which, with its author, had outlived his liking. Whatever it might mean for hair-splitting divines, for him the Caliphate meant the acknowledged headship of Islam, beyond as well as within his temporal dominions, and throughout his reign he spared no efforts to extend its recognition amongst the Faithful. The greater part of the Mohammedan world had passed or was passing rapidly under the rule of the Western nations of Europe, but all were to be taught to look once more for comfort and guidance to the Ottoman Empire, which had still one foot in

Europe, and might still, if Allah so willed, know how to wield the sword of Islam. Whatever may be thought of the methods by which Abdul Hamid sought to carry out his policy, one cannot altogether deny the greatness of a conception which aimed at procuring compensation for the territorial shrinkage of his Empire in a new accession of religious power. Yeldiz became the centre of a great Pan-Islamic propaganda with many widespread ramifications, designed both to strengthen the allegiance of Mohammedans within the Ottoman Empire to the Sultan, and to weaken that of Mohammedans outside his Empire to the Western nations who ruled over them. Whilst Lord Dufferin was Ambassador in Constantinople before going out to India in 1884 as Viceroy, a newspaper, the *Pek Islam*, devoted to the glorification of the Caliphate and the vilification of British rule in India, was being edited by a Punjaubi Mohammedan dismissed from the public service in India, and printed in Abdul Hamid's secret press at Yeldiz for circulation amongst Indian Mohammedans. Pan-Islamic propaganda did not, however, make much headway in India itself whilst Abdul Hamid was on the throne, though the Turkish victories in Thessaly during the Greco-Turkish War of 1898 enhanced his fame there as in other parts of the Mohammedan world, and it was then that his name came to be more frequently invoked at the Friday prayers in Indian mosques. The seeds which he had sown there only began to yield a harvest when contact was established between the new school of 'Young Mohammedans' in India and the 'Young Turks' of the Committee of Union and Progress shortly before the Great War, and a much more abundant one after the war, when Indian Mohammedans were swept by the frenzy of the Caliphate agitation into a temporary alliance with the Hindu Non-Co-operation Movement.

Abdul Hamid's Pan-Islamic aspirations as Caliph were to play a perhaps still more important part in the new orientation of Turkish policy towards Germany which, if only long

after Abdul Hamid's fall, brought the Ottoman Empire into the Great War as a subordinate ally of the Germanic Empires. The political compact which matured in 1914 was not even remotely in sight when, in response to Abdul Hamid's invitation, the first German military mission arrived in Constantinople to assist in the reorganization of the Turkish army that had been shattered in the war with Russia. Certainly Bismarck never dreamt, as William II afterwards did, of using Turkey as a bridgehead to German world dominion. His chief purpose was to have a voice in affairs at Constantinople which he could raise with added authority as 'the honest broker' to compose the clashing ambitions of Russia and Austria in the Balkans, and avoid the risk of being some day compelled to take sides with one or other of Germany's great neighbours in a conflict from which Europe had perhaps been only temporarily rescued by the Berlin Congress. Germany stepped by the same token into England's shoes at Constantinople, for after Disraeli's fall in 1880, Abdul Hamid interpreted the recall of Sir Henry Layard, who had supported the Turks through thick and thin, and Mr. Goschen's special Embassy to Constantinople, as the beginning of a far greater change in British policy towards Turkey than Gladstone was able to effect. Englishmen were at that time for the most part so entirely obsessed with the fear of Russia that Hobart Pasha, who, with the rank of a Turkish Admiral, was brought in to reorganize theTurkish Navy, i.e. to make bricks without straw, and General Valentine Baker, who was more seriously and rather more successfully engaged in reorganizing the Turkish gendarmerie, were both inclined to welcome the German new-comers as desirable collaborators. The Germans, on the other hand, were picked men and did excellent work, and, sticking to their last, they made Germany's name respected, until their successors became in due course, under General Von der Goltz, powerful agents and instruments of the policy with which that distinguished officer's reports did much to fire William II's imagination.

Whilst Constantinople was still the cockpit of conflicting European interests and Abdul Hamid's mysterious personality already foreshadowed some of the new and momentous developments which were to mark his reign and continue far beyond his time, it was by several long expeditions into the highways and byways of Asia Minor and of what was left of European Turkey that I was able to get some insight into the real state of the Ottoman Empire. The whole country was still suffering acutely from the consequences of the Russo-Turkish War, which had intensified all the customary evils of Turkish misgovernment.

A large part of the central plateau of Asia Minor, or *Anadolu* as the Turks called it, in contradistinction to *Rumili*, the land of the Roumi or Greeks, as they called their European possessions, is arid and inhospitable, though chiefly from lack of irrigation, but there are large tracts along the coast and inland watered by considerable streams which are singularly fertile and well-wooded. The ruins of ancient cities show them to have been the centres of a great and flourishing civilization in the days when Hellas covered Asia Minor with her colonies. Travelling was often pretty rough work. There were no railways then except a section of the British-built Smyrna-Aidin railway, and hardly any carriage roads that led anywhere. Occasionally a Pasha who wished to feather his nest quickly or to earn the reputation of being 'progressive,' would start building a road with a great flourish of trumpets. But when a certain number of miles had been laid out in the level plain and engineering difficulties began to arise – say a bridge to be thrown across a river, or some steep gradient to be negotiated in the hills – construction would stop suddenly. Either the Pasha had been removed, or he had seen no prospect of making further profits out of the contractors. I therefore travelled on horse-back, very modestly, with just one Turkish servant who rode a pack horse which carried my slender kit, and perhaps a mounted *zaptieh*, or gendarme, whom the authorities sometimes insisted on giving me as an

escort when the roads were said to be unsafe or when they wanted to keep an eye on my proceedings. I slept where best I could, sometimes in a Greek or Armenian inn, for Greeks and Armenians made up in those days a considerable, and in some provinces the larger, part of the population, and generally provided the brains and the economic enterprise of the country. Their inns were by no means always clean, but the food was usually eatable, and they afforded rather more privacy than the regular Turkish *Han* or Caravanserai at which I had still more often to put up – a rectangular mud or stone building with bare rooms on one side, and shelter for animals on the other side, all opening out into one courtyard. No food was provided and travellers cooked the provisions which they brought with them on little braziers in – or outside – their rooms. Sometimes there were not even separate rooms, but only a long pent roof, under which travellers were more or less closely huddled together. This sort of travel is necessarily slow and the discomforts are apt to be great. But I was young and active and loved the fresh air and the changing moods of nature and the far-stretched landscape and the opportunities, which railway travelling excludes, of coming into close daily contact with all manners and conditions of people, and observing at close quarters their manners of life and thought. They were as a rule quite friendly, save occasionally the Turkish officials, who disliked and suspected the prying eyes of a foreigner, a *rara avis* in those days and seldom prône to pay them a visit unless he wanted something.

I had very few sensational adventures. Once I was nearly drowned when riding over a low bridge across a river in spate. Part of the structure that had been recently patched up suddenly gave way and carried me and my horse with it, but quite gently, down into the stream and very fortunately close to the further bank, near which we picked ourselves up, rather shaken but unhurt, in shallow water, and proceeded on our journey. It taught me why Turkish travellers generally avoided bridges and preferred to look for a ford. Once I had

a narrower escape when a shower of rocks loosened by heavy rains descended on to me in a narrow defile, and one huge boulder struck my horse's head with the weight and momentum of a heavy shell and tore it right off his shoulders. The poor beast, or what remained of him, was sent spinning, and I with him, but he never moved again, whereas, though dazed with the shock and still more with the horror of his gruesome ending, I remained unscathed, and, as I had been riding only a little way ahead of my servant, I had not long to wait before he came up to the rescue.

One other incident seems worth describing more fully, as it illustrates the then conditions of travel not merely in remote parts of Asiatic Turkey, but in close proximity to Constantinople. I had set out from Brusa, the picturesque Turkish city which was almost the cradle of the Ottoman dynasty, to visit at Nicea the quaint old Byzantine church which gave Christianity the Nicene Creed. There are few more beautiful parts of Asia Minor than the forest glades between Brusa and Isnik, as the Turks call Nicea; and I remember no lovelier ride on an early summer day than through the groves of Spanish chestnuts with their feathery tufts of blossom and bright festoons of red and white and blue convolulus trailing from tree to tree. All the more dreary was the contrast as we emerged into the flat marshy country round Isnik itself. Lowering clouds had eclipsed the setting sun, and before we reached the long line of ruinous walls which still bear witness to the size and splendour of the ancient imperal city, the rain came down in torrents. Passing through the gap in which had once stood one of the eight great gateways, one looked at first in vain for any signs of human habitation. As far as the eye could range there was nothing but a vast stretch of swamps with gaunt skeletons of dead trees silhouetted against the leaden sky. Every tree, however, seemed to have its stork's nest and one could hear the flapping of the great birds' wings as they flocked back to their melancholy homes. The Nicean storks must surely be of a

peculiar breed, for one generally associates the stork with the high roofs of friendly human abodes where he is welcomed as the bringer of good luck. The Nicean stork dwells in my mind as a dismal bird of ill omen. From the outer walls to the squalid modern town as I then saw it, one travelled along the remains of an old Roman road, full of pitfalls in the growing darkness, for what appeared to me to be an interminable distance – it was actually nearly two miles – with forbidding pools of black water on either side, into which I thought every moment I should be swept by wild blasts of the rising wind; whilst I was alternately blinded by the driving rain and the vivid flashes of lightning.

In such weather few people were astir when I reached the tumble-down little town, and I had some difficulty in finding the house of the Kaimakam – the chief Turkish official – to whom I had a letter of introduction which would, I had been assured, secure me decent accommodation. When I got to it he proved singularly unresponsive, and merely sent me word that he had retired to the *hareem* and could transact no business until the following morning. To this I replied that as I knew he had orders to provide quarters for me, I should not move out of his house until he did. This at any rate had some effect and a surly police sergeant appeared and took me round to the house of the Government doctor who was commanded to put me up for the night. It turned out to be a large Turkish house which had seen better days; and so had its owner, who only very grudgingly admitted me after a long parley at the door which he kept meanwhile ajar on a chain. When he opened it I saw by the light of a small oil lamp he held in his hand a weird little man in a long tattered black coat and a black skull cap from which a few scanty wisps of white hair strayed down on his shoulders. His wrinkled face was the colour of old parchment, and though there was a grin on his thin lips his eyes set deep under their bushy eyebrows seemed to scowl at me with unconcealed malevolence. But his appearance was less extraordinary than the

language he spoke. It was an indescribable mixture of broken Turkish, broken French, broken Greek and broken Italian. As I gathered from him afterwards he had originally been an Italian army doctor, or more probably hospital assistant, who had come to the Crimea with the Piedmontese contingent which the genius of Cavour sent out to fight alongside the British and French armies at Sevastopol, and peg out his country's claim to a voice amongst the Great Powers of Europe. Through a succession of empty dilapidated rooms he led me into a large chamber in which there was a ramshackle iron bedstead without a mattress, and two rickety chairs. He assured me, however, that I should sleep very well there – very well indeed – and with a funny little laugh he added, 'So well that perhaps you won't want to get up in the morning.' I inquired about food, but that was clearly not on the coupon. 'Had I not got food with me? Had I not got a servant to prepare it?' In the next room, there was a table at my service and 'perhaps a cup of coffee after my meal.' I was too tired to argue and too anxious to strip off my sodden clothes. He also had evidently no desire to converse just then, and withdrew muttering that he would send my servant in to me, but could not have him sleeping in the house. My servant liked our host's looks as little as I did, and came back to complain loudly of the wretched quarters available for him and for our beasts in an outhouse across the yard. But he was a good-humoured fellow and readily admitted that I, too, was not going to be sumptuously entertained. I made the best of some odds and ends of provisions rescued from a rather damp saddle-bag, and presently my host, who in this respect was as good as his word, reappeared with some coffee, and poured one cup for me and one for himself, to show, as he remarked with his curious little chuckle, that I need not be afraid of being poisoned. The coffee seemed to unloose his tongue, and he began to talk volubly, but still in the same mixed gibberish, which, though I knew as much of all his four languages as he did, I often had much difficulty

in following. His conversation was not exhilarating. He had no love for his Turkish employers; for some time after the Crimean War he had a job at Constantinople with a big Pasha who died. Then the Turks, who were jealous of him, sent him to Isnik, because it was a very unhealthy place, and they thought he would die there. But, if he had attended lots of people and, he chuckled, himself closed their eyes, it was not he who died. He had been there for more than twenty-five years, and a terrible place it was for fever, and everybody sooner or later died of fever or something else. Again he chuckled. 'It was a good place for a doctor.' All his patients were sure to die. When I observed that doctors generally disliked losing their patients, his lean bones seemed to rattle with laughter. 'Why?' he rejoined; 'in this country it is only the dead patients that pay. They've all got land and the doctor pays himself or gets paid with a bit of land, and then with another bit of land, and sometimes if people ask questions as to how somebody died the old doctor holds his tongue.' He spread his hands out all round, as if he were embracing the whole horizon. 'Everybody around knows the old Italian doctor and they know he own lots and lots of land,' – there was another little giggle – 'they sometimes call him "*Shaitan Hakim,*" the Devil's Doctor.' And so he went on, telling stories of typhus and cholera and other epidemics which had raged from time to time, and apparently always to his immense satisfaction. He treated me to details and piled up the names of the Mohammeds and Alis and Dimitris and Paulos he had helped to pass into a better world. I knew he must be in most cases lying hard, and especially when he referred to his Mohammedan patients, for in those days very few Turks would have cared to call in any foreign doctor, and the sort of post he held in the Turkish service was mainly to look after the poorest class of *ghiaours*, Christians or Jews, and the inmates of the local jail. But there was an uncanny fascination in the old man's stories of which death was the constant refrain. Scarcely

any word occurred more frequently than *morto* or *eulmish* – he died.

At last he withdrew and assured me again that I should have a very good night – 'a very good night indeed.' My servant came in as soon as he was gone. He did not want me to stay in the house, and pressed me to pack our traps and move over to the Turkish *han*, which he said had some quite decent rooms. He did not like the way in which our host had tried to cross-question him about me, and still less the stories he had picked up about him. A Greek from whom he had bought barley for the horses had crossed himself frantically as soon as the doctor's name was mentioned. But I disliked the idea of running away, and though the little doctor was clearly half crazy, I did not anticipate any serious mischief. My servant then asked me to allow him to come and sleep in the next room, as he had found that there was no one at all in the house except our host. I declined, because as he had taken our horses over to the *han* it was his business to be there and look after them. The place was certainly uncanny. There were four doors to the room. None of them could be locked or fastened. Three of them opened into smaller rooms, empty and dark, and the fourth into an inner courtyard, on to which I could look out through a large glass casement with most of its panes broken or cracked. I spread my little cork mattress, which was the most cherished part of my travelling equipment, on the bedstead, and taking off very few of my clothes, wrapped myself up as best I could in the only dry overcoat I had and put my revolver under my head. I had had a long and tiring day's march and was soon sound asleep. When I woke, I woke with a great and most unpleasant start. The moon was shining brightly into the room and, sitting on the edge of the bedstead and at the foot of it, I saw the little doctor and in his hand the gleam of a small steel blade. I jumped up, seizing my revolver, and pointed it at him, shouting to him not to move or I would fire. He instantly fled yelling and, throwing up his hands, dropped his weapon.

It was an old disused razor from my toilet case, which I had placed on the window-sill, and it must have attracted his attention when he stole into my room, for what purpose I shall never know, though hardly on a friendly visit in the middle of the night. It was only half-past three. There was not much danger of his coming back, but I could not bring myself to lie down again. I sat up and waited for dawn, which was fortunately not very far off, and before it was really light my servant came and was evidently delighted to find that I was still alive. As soon as my traps were packed again we carried them over to the Turkish inn, where I had an early cup of Turkish coffee. My adventure had already been bruited about by my servant. Neither the *hanji* nor anyone else showed any great surprise. Only a respectable-looking Turk muttered that such things were bound to happen when the Infidel held Turkey and her rulers in the hollow of his hand.

Save for that one episode, I found Asia Minor quite a safe country for a foreigner to travel in, though there was not much safety for the unfortunate inhabitants. It was on the whole very scantily populated even then, and Abdul Hamid was using it even more freely than his predecessors as a dumping ground for Mohammedan refugees, whom he systematically incited to exchange their homes in the European provinces that had passed into the hands of the Infidels for lands flowing with milk and honey, which he promised them they would find in Asia Minor under the beneficent sway of the great Câliph of Islam. Sometimes these *Muhajjirin*, or Emigrants for the Faith, were the helpless victims of an unscrupulous propaganda that appealed only too easily to their credulous ears. Of such I met a large party hailing from Bulgaria, woe-begone and sick and half starved in the depths of winter when the country was deep in snow, trekking from Alexandretta to a place in Cilicia bearing the not unusual Turkish name of Yeni-Shehir, or the New Town. They had obeyed the call of a *Mollah* who had been sent from Constantinople to preach the exodus amongst the Bulgarian

Moslems, and they had been shipped from port to port and fleeced everywhere by greedy officials, and at last flung ashore at Alexandretta to find their way to a deserted village I had passed through a few days before in the neighbourhood of some Greek ruins I wanted to see. Death had by this time taken a heavy toll of the wretched wayfarers, and I know not what became of the survivors. All I could do was to give them the little help which a traveller like myself could spare and to appeal on their behalf with a very meagre chance of success to the Turkish authorities in the small town I was next bound for.

But there were plenty of other *Muhajjirin* less deserving of pity, Kurds and Circassians, especially Circassians, turbulent fellows, who had served as irregular cavalry during the war, and on being disbanded had been sent in batches to different parts of Anatolia to be settled, it was at first announced, on Government lands. But they were not satisfied with the lands allotted them, or else they found them already tenanted, and there was trouble wherever they went. For they were apt to seize on any lands that took their fancy, and wherever the helpless people were too few in numbers and too disorganized to resist, they simply drove them away and appropriated their homes. Even then they seldom settled down as tillers of the soil, but lived chiefly by plundering the country all around, killing or seizing inoffensive wayfarers, carrying off women and children, and establishing a petty reign of terror. The chief sufferers were the peaceful Turkish peasantry. There was no landed gentry to protect them, for the old Dereh Beys had been wiped out by Sultan Mahmud at the beginning of the century, and such large landlords as had been left were mostly absentees who squandered their substance in Constantinople, whilst the local Turkish authorities remained inert or were afraid to deal with lawless adventurers who might quite possibly have, as they were fond of boasting, influential connections at Yeldiz. On one occasion on a pelting wet day I had ridden on ahead of my servant to reach

shelter as soon as I could, crossing with some difficulty a stream that was in flood, which half an hour later he found too much swollen to be forded. I was thus left to spend the night in the nearest caravanserai in my wet clothes and without any bedding, and with only the meagre food provided by the *hanji*. My neighbour in the next bare pen allotted to me was a kindly old Turkish woman, whose son, a farmer, had been killed, she told me, by brigands, and she was taking three small grandchildren to some relations a few days' journey off. She plied me with good Turkish coffee and sweets, and even lent me one of her quilted coverlets, which unfortunately proved too lively a boon to be acceptable, and poured out to me, when I said I was English, the whole story of what they were all suffering at the hands of Circassian bandits planted out upon the country by orders from Stambul. Her son had travelled a long way some months ago to ask for help from the great English Consul, who had been sent out by the British Government to see that their wrongs were righted, and he had been waylaid and killed for his pains on his way home. The great English Consul was, I discovered, Sir Charles Wilson, who with a large staff of selected officers, including amongst others Kitchener and Stewart, who was afterwards with Gordon in Khartum, and Chermside, whom I knew afterwards in the Eastern Sudan, to superintend on the spot the reforms in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, to which Abdul Hamid was pledged to us under the Cyprus Convention.* A few days later in a village decimated by typhus and famine I was allowed by the friendly Imam of the mosque to sleep under its porch. I heard from him, too, a very similar story. Circassian refugees had swarmed over the country like locusts and stripped it bare, and he also had been moved to seek out one of the English Consuls and implore his protection for a poor, helpless people. He had been most kindly received and all he said had been noted down on paper, and he had come back hopeful and comforted with many promises. But all those Consuls, he now heard,

had gone home, and men, women and children around him were dying like flies. What had happened was that after Gladstone had come back to power and washed his hands of his predecessor's policy in Turkey, Wilson and his staff were all hastily recalled, and no effective steps were ever again taken to see that any reforms were actually carried out on the spot, though we ourselves stuck to Cyprus, which was the price Turkey had paid for Disraeli's support.

The Ottoman Empire had gone bankrupt before the Russo-Turkish War, and its financial plight was so desperate after the war that even in a debased currency the pay of the troops as well as of the officials was falling dangerously into arrears, and the chief business of the provincial authorities, who looked only towards, and were dependent on, Constantinople, was to extract the last piastre of taxation from a reduced and impoverished population. Mohammedans and Christians alike had their general and particular grievances against Constantinople, and if the Christians had in some ways worse burdens to bear than their Moslem neighbours, there was at that time very little bad feeling between them. The Anatolian peasant was a not unkindly creature, and the fanaticism always latent in a Mohammedan people had not yet been incited to take vengeance on Greeks and Armenians, who were more often regarded as fellow sufferers under common misrule. So widespread had been the impression created by Sir Charles Wilson's mission that even when it was withdrawn the people would not readily believe that the promised era of reform had vanished with his keen young officers, and not only the wretched country folk, but the Turkish notables in the larger villages or smaller towns, would come to me simply because I was an Englishman, and sometimes, no doubt refusing to believe that I was not travelling in any official capacity, would pour out their troubles to me together with copious assurances that their only hope of better days lay in the wisdom and power of the exalted British Government. They could have given me no more genuine proof

of their confidence than the freedom with which they reviled Stambul as the source of all evil. Nowhere did I hear such rank treason talked as in a little town called Kedis, where I had to stay a night on my way down from Angora to Afium Kara Hissar – Angora then an obscure provincial city, picturesquely situated on a scarped hillside under the battlemented walls of an ancient Seljuk stronghold, but incredibly squalid and malodorous, and Afium Kara Hissar the relatively well-to-do centre of a considerable opium trade, which none ever dreamed would be some day the decisive battlefield of a Greco-Turkish war. There was no Greek or Armenian inn at Kedis, and only a rather rough Turkish *han*. I was just settling down as best I could, when a fat, comfortable-looking Turk, who from his dress was evidently a worthy notable of the town, waddled in, and after bestowing on me such greeting as a good Musulman bestows upon an Unbeliever, proceeded to apologize for the meagre accommodation provided for travellers, and begged me at any rate to come and share an evening meal with him and a few friends in his own house. I accepted gratefully, and found myself an hour later in good company squatting on the floor in front of a large brass tray, loaded with excellent dishes. My host was a merchant dealing in Manchester cottons, which then had a monopoly of the Turkish market, still almost untouched by German competition. Of his other guests two were also traders, and there was one small official who had travelled as far as Constantinople; but the élite of the party consisted of the *Kadi*, or judge, and of the *Imam*, or leader of public prayers in the mosque. These, too, were quite willing to meet an Infidel. They were in fact all extremely friendly to me as an Englishman, for Great Britain had once more saved Turkey from utter destruction at the hands of the victorious Russians, and they looked to her to put the old Ottoman Empire on its feet again.

Each had his own grievance. One of the merchants had lost his son in the war, though he had been entitled to exemp-

tion from military service, but the boy had been cheated of his release and had died in Bulgaria, and the father was still being sued for the exemption money. Another complained that a new Pasha, recently arrived in the province from Constantinople, would not recognize payments made to his predecessor, and that he himself had been mulcted twice over, though he had a nephew employed in the Turkish collector's office. Even the oldest title deeds did not avail against arbitrary confiscation, nor was *Wakf* property itself, though placed in trust under religious sanction, always safe. None of the guests attempted to disguise the terrible plight in which Turkey was, nor did anyone dispute the responsibility that lay upon their rulers at Constantinople. In fact, as their tongues were unloosed – not, indeed, by wine but by good cheer and a congenial atmosphere – the language they used about their rulers waxed stronger and stronger. There was an International Commission then sitting at Constantinople to reorganize Turkish finances, which had been bankrupt even before the Russo-Turkish War. But they all protested bitterly against the term 'Public Debt' being applied to debts contracted solely to meet the reckless extravagance of their rulers. The *Imam* was particularly plain spoken. 'What has the money been spent on?' 'On palaces and jewels and luxuries from abroad and great Frankish entertainments and big ships and big guns which have not saved us from defeat; and what have the people had out of it all? Wall'ah el Azim! Why, the very name "Public Debt" betrays the whole thing. The palaces and the fleets and the armies are all "Humayoni" (Imperial), and only the debt is *Borj Omoumiyeh* – the "Public" Debt – the debt which our shoulders have to bear.' They all expressed loud assent. The little local official who had travelled to Constantinople was quick to give a modern form of expression to the common discontent. 'By God the All Merciful, I tell you there will be no peace in this land until we have a *Rimpublic*.' Again there was general applause. I confess I could hardly believe my ears when I

heard this quaint confession of republican faith. Apologizing for my scanty knowledge of Turkish I professed not to have quite grasped the speaker's meaning. 'Sir, it may not be known to you that in the days of the early Caliphs, upon whom be peace, the Moslem people held all possessions of the State in common and these were called the "Beit-el-ual," and surely that was a *Rimpublic.*'

When I hear so much surprise expressed to-day at Mustapha Kemal's choice of Angora for the capital of his Turkish Republic and at his undisguised hostility to Constantinople, I remember my Turkish friends at Kedis and wonder whether the Ghazi has not perhaps made a rather shrewd appeal to a sort of Anatolian patriotism deeply rooted in the old Turkish stock that never went beyond Asia Minor and looked upon Stambul and Rumili, i.e. the Sultan's European dominions, as dangerously tainted with a foreign atmosphere. But on the other hand I remember that the 'Rimpublic' on which they set their hopes was to be modelled on the earliest Islamic polity. What would they have thought of a Ghazi who has now dethroned Islam as well as Constantinople?

CHAPTER VII

EUROPEAN TURKEY IN THE MELTING POT

WHILST that was the condition of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions, European Turkey presented a somewhat different picture when in the autumn of 1880 I travelled through Thessaly into Southern Macedonia and across the Pindus into Epirus and Albania. There, too, there was abundant misrule and disaffection, but there was not the same universal dejection. There was everywhere the sense of great changes soon to come, and all seemed to be equally convinced that notwithstanding the respite that Disraeli had secured for the old Ottoman Empire at the Berlin Congress, Turkish domination was already doomed to disappear from Europe, save perhaps at Constantinople where it might derive continued immunity from the dividing jealousies of the great Powers. Even the Turks had few delusions and with their inborn fatalism they were beginning to turn their eyes once more on to their ancient homelands East of the Bosporus. European Turkey was for the most part richer and better cultivated and more prosperous than Asiatic Turkey, and the Christian races, generally in a large majority, were stirred by new expectations to work with a better will. The appetites of all had been merely whetted by the creation of a new Bulgaria, though on a much smaller scale than Russia had proposed in the Treaty of San Stefano, and the promises made to Greece in Berlin still awaited fulfilment. Thessaly was still Turkish and Larissa was still officially called Yeni Shehir. But the Turks themselves knew that annexation to Greece was imminent, and when I passed through the beautiful Vale of Tempe, a wild garden of broad spreading trees and flowering bushes between lofty cliffs of grey limestone and super-impendent forests, on the slopes of Thessalian Olympus the grey-bearded old dervish of Baba Osman's *Tekke* showed

me with many lamentations the sword and the Koran of its ancient founder. They had, he assured me, worked great wonders in far-away times, but Allah had withdrawn his strength from them, and he would soon have to take them down from the wall where they had so long hung as objects of veneration throughout the land and wander forth with them in his old age to the distant countries whence his ancestors had crossed as conquerors into the land of Roum, i.e. the Byzantine Empire of the Greeks. When I asked him why he could not remain and finish his days in peace under Christian rule, he added: 'To me all men are sons of God; but Baba Osman (the mercy of God be upon him!) lived in other days and his sword is still red with the *Ghiaours*' blood. It would not be well that it should fall into their hands.'

More uncertain than the fate of Thessaly was the fate of Macedonia. It had been restored to Turkish rule under the Berlin Treaty, but only to become the cockpit of internecine feuds between Greeks and Bulgars, who were already scheming for a larger share of the Turkish inheritance 'after the next war.' I had the good luck to be invited by a friendly old Turkish General, Selami Pasha, who was then Inspector of Cavalry in European Turkey, to accompany him on an official tour he was just about to undertake in the districts I was most anxious to visit. He belonged to one of the old Turkish families in Stambul; he had fought in the Crimea, where he had learnt to like the English, and he was an easy-going, elderly and rather portly gentleman, though still thoroughly at home in the saddle, who was waiting quietly for his impending retirement and preferred to be on pleasant terms with everybody, not excluding the *Ghiaours*, as, without at all intending to be offensive, he often called the Christians when talking to me. It was upon them he indeed preferred to quarter himself when he could during our tour, partly because that was his right as one of the ruling race on a military mission, and partly because it enabled him to enjoy his glass of the forbidden fruit, the country we

crossed being a particularly good wine country. His staff was less forthcoming, but he knew how to keep them in order, and as neither he nor they knew anything of any language but their own, I had a first-rate opportunity of improving my Turkish which was only colloquial but already fairly fluent. It was altogether a very pleasant experience, riding day after day in the early autumn through fertile valleys, dotted with villages and orchards and fields of ripening maize, and on either side a background of deep blue mountains; or crossing here and there up and down slippery stairways of rock the lower ranges of intervening hills; and at night putting up in rough but by no means comfortless quarters with well-to-do farmers who were generally the agents of an absentee Turkish landlord, and once, even, at Kosana, with the local Greek bishop, with whom the Pasha exchanged rather ribald but good-humoured jokes all through the long and very succulent supper, washed down with the best Kosana wine. Anyone who judged Turkish rule by Selami Pasha's attitude towards all and sundry would have imagined it to be of a not unkindly patriarchal type. But it had other aspects, and as I was an Englishman and credited with immense influence because I was travelling with a Pasha, I was sometimes sought out, especially after dark or just as we were starting in the morning, by groups of unfortunate people who begged for my intervention to obtain the redress of cruel grievances which, if doubtless often exaggerated, were seldom baseless. The Pasha invariably washed his hands of them as he had, he declared, nothing to do with 'politics'; but he would freely confess to me when we were riding side by side – and he was never more confidential than during our rides – that the civil administration, and especially the judges, whom he detested, were 'all rotten,' and that now that the Turkish sword had lost its edge he saw very bad times coming for his country. He too was, however, a fatalist, and with a shrug of the shoulders and a pious reference to the will of Allah, he would dig his spurs into his steed, saying,

'Now let us have a bit of a gallop.' And the old cavalry officer did not much care what sort of ground it was for a gallop! From Larissa to beyond Kosana the population was almost wholly Greek with a small sprinkling of Turks; but as we approached Monastir we got into the debatable zone in which Greeks and Slavs hated each other almost more than they hated the Turks, and were already starting the fratricidal feuds which lasted into and survived the Balkan War and the Great War, and appear to have only now reached an end in so much of Macedonia as has been finally annexed to Greece through the settlement of an overwhelming majority of Greeks driven out of Asia Minor by the Turks. In 1880 a very brisk propaganda was being carried on in the Greek and the Slav interest respectively by school masters and priests and more ferociously by brigands who called themselves patriots and claimed to be the successors of the Klephts and Arnatoli of the War of Independence. Language was held to be the great test of nationality, and at Monastir both sides flooded me with arguments and statistics to show that in such-and-such a district the majority were Greeks because they spoke Greek, or inversely, that they were not Greeks though they spoke Greek, but were really Hellenophone Bulgars. In another district the majority might speak Bulgarian, but in reality were Bulgarophone Hellenes, and so on. The one redeeming feature was that schools were founded and multiplied by all these contending factions, though chiefly in order to bring up boys to speak the language, which would serve the political purpose of the conflicting factions. More drastic were the arguments used by the militant type of propagandists who called themselves *Komitajis* because they were generally in league with some secret political committee and, in spite of their often appalling cruelty, were therefore popular heroes with those whose national aspirations they were supposed to serve. Whilst I was at Monastir one of these bands swooped down on a Sunday morning on a small and prosperous village less than a day's march from the city.

The leader having posted most of his men outside the little church, he marched into it gorgeously attired and armed to the teeth, accompanied by an equally picturesque attendant and eight other men carrying Martini rifles. He attended the whole service devoutly and waited for the priest's final blessing before he turned on the panic-stricken congregation and announced that they were his prisoners, and must yield up eight hostages, men, women or children at his choice, whom he intended to carry off into the mountains until payment of the heavy fine he was about to impose upon them as a penalty for their 'lack of patriotism.' Resistance was impossible and the hostages were duly carried away. No help of course came from the Turkish authorities at Monastir and a couple of hundred Turkish liras were scraped together in the village, with which two of the villagers were despatched into the mountains. The brigand patriot laughed at such a paltry ransom, but to show that his captives were still safely alive he paraded them in turn before their friends, until, as the last one of the eight was passing, he swung his sword and sliced off the old man's head, which rolled at the feet of the luckless messengers of peace, who were his son and his nephew.

Crossing the Pindus range into Epirus a few weeks later, I found things still worse, for in that wild mountain country there had developed a regular guerilla warfare between Greeks and Turks. I had parted then from Selami Pasha and had joined company with an adventurous fellow-countryman, George Paget, who was in great favour with the Turks, as he had led the Pomak mountaineers of the Rhodope in their rising against the Russians towards the close of the Russo-Turkish War. The Turkish authorities were doubtless far more concerned for his safety than for mine, but anyhow they insisted upon giving us a large escort of troops with a Turkish major and a Turkish subaltern to escort us over the worst part of the journey. As these wretched fellows had had no pay for months, they naturally looked to us to recoup

them, and their zeal was consequently boundless – and expensive. We frequently heard occasional shots some distance in front or behind, and these, we were told, were exchanged between our covering parties and large bands of brigands who were after us for ransom. How far these stories were true we never quite got to know, but one night there was a moment when we certainly believed in them. We had pitched our one tent in a moderately broad highland valley where there was plenty of room for our escort to deploy in case of need. We woke up in the middle of the night to hear very brisk firing and wild shouting, and then suddenly our tent collapsed on to us and we were pinned down on our camp beds. It certainly seemed as if this time the enemy was on us. Paget had to rip up the canvas with a knife before we could get ourselves disentangled, but when we finally emerged, revolver in hand, to face the worst, we heard our servant, an Albanian, calling out that it had been a false alarm and that all was right. What had happened was that a herd of cattle had been scared by, or had scared, our own Turkish soldiers, who had opened fire blindly in the dark, and then the frightened animals had charged, equally blindly, through the open, and, butting up against our tent, had dragged its ropes and brought our canvas house about our ears. We could afford to laugh over that incident, but on the very next day's march we had incontestably gruesome evidence of the frightful lawlessness that was just then devastating that Turkish borderland. At one spot the bodies of five Turkish soldiers, trapped in a narrow gorge, were lying almost in a heap, and further on at short distances we came across two Greeks who had their throats cut from ear to ear. All this had evidently happened within the last day or two. Presently our track began to descend abruptly to the half-deserted town of Metzovo, and then by easier stages to Yanina, lying apparently in perfect peace on the further banks of its shining lake.

The epidemic of savage reprisals that raged just then in Epirus doubtless derived some of its virulence from the

political conditions of the day, but its genesis lay in the grim pages of history, whereof the memory still seared the hearts of the people. At Yanina the ruined battlements and yawning vaults of the old fortress which Ali Pasha Tepeleni built out into the lake as a palace for himself and a prison for his victims, bear witness to the pride and pomp of the great barbarian whose hospitality Byron enjoyed and sang. But we saw a couple of days later the haunted cliffs overlooking the gorges of the Cocytus and the Acheron which recall perhaps the darkest of all his dark deeds. It was the stronghold of the Suliots, the bravest of the Greek highlanders, who for fifteen years defied the assaults of the famous tyrant of Epirus after he had broken the power of all its feudal chieftains. Where brute force had failed, diplomacy in its most usual Oriental form prevailed. Famine and disease were at last playing havoc in the thinned ranks of the defenders when some of the clan that held the Northern key to the position were tempted to sell the pass. Most of the men of Suli, however, fought to the bitter end, and when all hope was lost one heroic band still clung to a small fort at the head of the pass up which the Turks were charging – in front of them every coign of vantage already rushed by the invaders, behind them the sheer precipice overlooking the Acheron. Samuel, the warrior monk, whose name has been enshrined in many patriotic songs, steeled them to a supreme resolve, and as the Turks swarmed in, a tremendous explosion involved in the same ruin victors and vanquished alike. Samuel's own hand had laid the lighted match to the powder magazine. The Suliot women had in the meantime retired to the edge of the cliffs overhanging the Acheron and when they heard in the explosion the preconcerted signal for their sacrifice, they raised their voices, it is told, in a last hymn, half triumph, half dirge, and taking their children in their arms, flung themselves down headlong into the black waters of the River of Death.

One of the wildest nights I can remember was the one I

spent 'on Suli's rock,' and I can almost claim to have seen the 'ghost of freedom' sweeping over it. We were two days out from Yanina on our way towards Parga on the Adriatic when, after a long climb, we reached those desolate heights. It was late in the afternoon and a heavy thunderstorm was sweeping straight towards us. We asked for hospitality at a Turkish military post which occupied the site of the old fort, but the ragged sentry would not let us in, and when his superior officer, scarcely less ragged, had been brought out to parley with us, he looked blankly at the comprehensive permit we had got from the Pasha of Yanina, and, strangely impervious to other more substantial arguments, told us quite firmly that though he was, of course, prepared to kiss the Pasha's seal, he was a soldier who had to obey military orders, and those orders were to admit no *franghi* inside the fort of which he was alone in charge. *Olmaz, Effendim, Olmaz*! – It is not allowed! – that categorical negative to which one soon had to grow accustomed in Turkey. We then proposed to pitch our tent for the night in as sheltered a spot as we could find amongst the ruins of the old Suliot village, Kako Suli, as it is now called – the ill-fated Suli. But the mere suggestion called forth one cry of horror from our escort and servants and muleteers. 'Was it not known to all that every night the spirits of its last defenders hover about the air, making the dark hours hideous with wild war-songs and lamentations; and that no mortal can hear the fierce shriek with which they vanish at the first break of dawn, and live unscathed? Had not old Dimitri the miller been wandering about the hills with scattered senses ever since the night when the storm drove him to take shelter in those accursed ruins? *Olmaz, Effendim, Olmaz!*' There was nothing but to seek refuge in the one isolated house, a little further away, that showed signs of human habitation. It was tenanted by no less than three families who, as we found out, claimed descent from the old fighting stock of the Suliots. How their forbears escaped destruction no one apparently knew for certain, but

report had it that they came of the traitors' family, which had ever afterwards been dogged by misfortune. It was a strange and strangely picturesque group that gathered round the large blazing hearth while the wind and storm were raging outside. In one corner a shrivelled old woman in her dotage, a grandmother or great-grandmother, who, it was said, had actually lived through the days of 'the great trouble,' and beside her five small children, confused bundles of rags, with bright eager faces and curly heads, sometimes prattling cheerfully and then suddenly shrieking with fright when the lightning flashed and the thunder crashed above us. In the opposite corner, as motionless as a Greek statue, for which she might well have posed, stood the slight, erect figure of a girl whose features recalled the perfect classic beauty handed down to us by Hellenic art – a young bride, apparently, from her dress which was bright and new and clean. Crouching opposite to the fire, while their wives stood spinning more or less listlessly behind them, were three dour highlanders, tall and powerfully built, with strongly marked features and shaggy beards and long dishevelled hair, who sang for our benefit the old folk-songs which told of bygone times when their fathers were the lords of the soil and smote their Turkish foes. Only when the wind howled or the thunder roared more loudly they too would stop for a moment to cross themselves as devoutly as any of their womenkind, and mutter a prayer for the souls of the Suliots 'who were about.' Towards midnight, when the storm lulled, the grown-up members of the family successively retired to an outer penthouse where, with our guards and muleteers, they continued to ward off the ghosts with still more uproarious songs until the first streak of day. We were left to share the common room with the children and the old crone, who never ceased all through the night to moan and cross herself whenever a fresh gust of wind whistled through the rafters of the roof. There was not much sleep for me that night, and the memory of it still remains vivid and haunting.

Whatever old Virgil, who was never there, may say about a *facilis descensus Averni*, it was a frightfully steep and slippery zigzag that brought us down into the dark ravine of the Acheron, and looking up one could see how sheer was the precipice over which the Suliot women took their heroic leap into eternity. Albania now claims that the Suliots were Albanians and not Greeks, but it is in Greek folk-lore that they live, and in the days in which they won their title to fame, no political distinction was yet drawn between two kindred nationalities united in a common hatred of the Turk. Not till the Ottoman Empire in Europe showed increasing signs of dissolution, and new hopes had been awakened by the Berlin Congress, did the claims of a separate Albanian nation make themselves heard. The Albanian clans, occupying a large part of the mountain ranges overlooking the Adriatic from the Gulf of Arta up to Scutari, all spoke a common language, though still almost unwritten, but they were divided by differences of religion. The Northern clans were Roman Catholics; in the centre and in the South many had accepted Islam from the conquering Turk, and the rest still clung to the old Eastern form of Christianity, and, under the influence of their Greek clergy, looked chiefly towards Greece for their liberation. Turkey, on the other hand, having learnt in Bulgaria how effectively the Christian Powers could invoke the principle of nationality for the benefit of one of her subject races, was moved to encourage the first stirrings of national sentiment amongst the Albanians in order to check the separatist movement for annexation to Greece. As a Mohammedan Power she could also call in aid the religious sympathies of all the Albanians who were Mohammedans. We soon found ourselves in the midst of an active agitation conducted under the auspices of an Albanian League for Albanian autonomy under Ottoman sovereignty. Some soreness had been caused by British naval demonstrations in the Adriatic to compel the procrastinating Turk to carry out the decisions of the Berlin Congress, but England had so recently befriended

Turkey against Russia that the leading spirits of the Albanian League were delighted to take Englishmen into their confidence. So we were privileged to enjoy the almost medieval hospitality of highland chieftains, who spread before us whole roasted sheep stuffed with pistachio nuts and mountainous rice *pilafs* in their primitive castles, whilst their armed retainers in short white fustanella skirts, cut not unlike the Scottish kilt, lined the walls of the rough banqueting hall with flaming torches which, maybe, produced more smoke than light. Many of the great Mohammedan families had retained possession of the fiefs conferred upon them by the rulers of Epirus in pre-Turkish days, and just as their forbears had probably embraced Islam in order to save their lands from confiscation, it was largely the fear of losing them that made them now cling to the Turkish connection. They still wielded almost feudal authority over their clans, and it required all their authority to make them sink their intertribal quarrels and exchange the kiss of peace in the name of Albanian autonomy. Once or twice we witnessed scenes of fraternization between Mohammedan and Christian tribesmen, but these were generally enacted in the presence of the local Turkish Pasha, and lacked the same spontaneity and sincerity. The new wine of Nationalism was, however, already fermenting strongly throughout Albania, and though I was scarcely conscious of it at the time, I was actually witnessing the emergence of a nation which was going to take its place amongst the independent states of the Balkan Peninsula as Albania – with what ultimate security of tenure still remains to be seen.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST TWO RULERS OF BULGARIA

HAD I not seen what Turkish rule meant for Abdul Hamid's subjects before I visited any of the States that had been emancipated from it in the last century I should probably have shared the prejudice against almost every one of the young Balkan States, which their too often discreditable record of internal strife and disorder was only too well calculated to raise. But when one had been in Turkey and crossed the Turkish frontier into any one of them no prejudice could blind him to the immediate change from the dead weight of Turkish stagnation into a more vital atmosphere, instinct at least with freedom and progress, and with intense, if often dangerously passionate and impatient, patriotism. There was evidence in all of them of a new striving for better things. They displayed in varying degrees a revival of trade and industry of which the Turk was quite incapable. There were schools and universities and a great popular demand for education. Rumania and even Serbia had railways which brought them into direct contact with central Europe. Bukarest prided itself on being a *petit Paris*, or at least a reflection of Parisian elegance and French intellectuality, and the great alluvial plains of the lower Danube were becoming one of the granaries of the world. Athens was inclined to live too largely on the glories of ancient Hellas and in future dreams of a greater Hellas still to come, but Hellenism already stood for much more than a pious aspiration. Beyond the narrow confines of a small Hellenic kingdom there were populations more numerous than its own in Asiatic as well as European Turkey, whose mother tongue connoted racial and cultural affinities quickened by growing facilities of social and economic contact. Greece could always draw on the unstinted generosity of the wealthiest and the poorest amongst the

industrious Greek communities established not only all over the Levant, but in France and in England. She was rapidly learning to utilize her maritime position and the traditions of a seafaring people to build up an active mercantile marine and a considerable coast-wise trade, and her people were as a rule hard-working and frugal, and had begun to be even law-abiding. She still suffered, perhaps even more than the other Balkan States, under the old curse of rival political factions. But King George, the Danish prince elected to the throne of Greece in 1863, like King Carol, the South German scion of an elder branch of the Hohenzollern family, who had reigned in Rumania since 1866, was a wise and constitutional ruler who knew how to exercise the Royal authority without allowing himself to be tempted into overstraining it by the restiveness of immature parliaments, and both those sovereigns found in such statesmen as Tricoupis at Athens and Jan Bratiano in Bukarest patriotic statesmen well qualified to second their efforts. Serbia was less fortunate in her King, though, or because, he was the only Balkan sovereign who belonged by birth to the country he ruled, and to the usual party dissensions were added still deeper elements of internal discord in the latent strife between the reigning Obrenovitch dynasty, of which King Milan was the somewhat disreputable representative, and the descendants of the old national hero, Kara Georg, who had first successfully raised the standard of revolt against Turkey at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Everywhere in the Balkans and in the great European capitals, people's eyes were chiefly turned in the early eighties to the new Bulgarian Principality which had only just ceased to be the Turkish vilayet of the Danube. Was it to be merely, as Disraeli believed, a puppet in the hands of Russia who had created it at the cost of a great war? Or did its sturdy, simple peasantry, whose national status and name had for the first time secured international recognition in the Treaty of Berlin, really possess the qualities needed for attaining to genuine

and independent nationhood? In all the Balkan States, as has indeed happened throughout history during periods of transition from primitive social conditions to more highly organized and centralized forms of national government, much has turned upon the personal character and statesmanship of the ruler. It has been so, and perhaps even more than elsewhere, in Bulgaria, for she had in succession for her two first rulers men of two very different types, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, a romantic and chivalrous figure who flashed for only a few years, but not ingloriously, across the stage of contemporary history, and Prince Ferdinand of Saxe Coburg Kohary, who flourished for thirty years like the green bay tree.

I knew them both. Prince Alexander was a scion, but by a morganatic marriage, of the Grand Ducal family of Hesse, and thus already connected with the British royal family before his brother, Prince Henry, married Princess Beatrice, the youngest daughter of Queen Victoria, whilst having served with the Russian Army in the Turkish War of 1877 he was a *persona grata* with the Tsar Alexander II. His unblemished character, singularly handsome presence and unassuming manner told equally in his favour, and in 1879 he was chosen, ostensibly by the Powers but in reality by Russia, to be the first Prince of Bulgaria, the small and autonomous State created under the Treaty of Berlin but still subject to the formal suzerainty of Turkey. Like many other treaties of peace, that of Berlin was pregnant with the germs of future wars. It carried the recognition of the principle of nationalities in the Balkan peninsula just far enough to whet the appetite of all its restless peoples, but not far enough to satisfy a single one, and least of all the Bulgarians of whom one section was thrust back under direct Turkish rule and another was confined within an absurdly artificial pen labelled Eastern Rumelia, with a Turkish Governor-General who had no vestige of real authority, and the shadow of a Turkish garrison which never in fact materialized. Russia, having

won the war right up to the gates of Constantinople, but lost the peace she sought to impose on Turkey at San Stefano, was determined at any rate to dominate the small Principality of Bulgaria, the one brand she had snatched from the diplomatic burning. Surrounded by Russians and with a masterful Russian agent at his elbow, Prince Alexander was at first content to take his instructions from St. Petersburg, and when I went for the first time to Bulgaria in 1881, it was to witness, as an occasional correspondent of the *Daily News*, the *coup d'état* he carried out in the teeth of the Grand National Assembly at Sistowa, which vainly protested against the subversion of the perhaps prematurely democratic constitution conferred upon the young Principality by the combined wisdom of the Powers. The *coup d'état* was a Russian *coup*, for she reckoned that the unfettered authority which the Prince was henceforth to exercise would be exercised exactly as she might be pleased to direct. But here she overreached herself. The Prince, who had higher standards of conduct than Russian statesmen imagined, was soon driven to elect between his duty to the Bulgarian people committed to his charge, and, not merely the selfish ambitions of Russia, but the still more selfish greed of Russian *tchinoviks* deputed from St. Petersburg to serve Russia in Bulgaria. He did not hesitate to make his choice.

When I went back to Bulgaria in 1885 he was the idol of his people. The union of Eastern Rumelia, or Southern Bulgaria, with the Principality had been effected without bloodshed, but also without any help from Russia, who resented Prince Alexander's independent action, and when Austria, who objected as selfishly to a strong Bulgaria as Russia to an independent one, prompted King Milan to launch the Serbian army against Bulgaria whilst the Turk still threatened her with war, the Prince had led his young troops to battle and, after three days' fighting at Slivnitza, hurled the invaders back in such disorder that only an Austrian

ultimatum saved Serbia from abject defeat. Not only had Prince Alexander brought Bulgaria a long stage nearer to the fulfilment of her national aspirations, but he had won the heart of a Prussian Princess, the daughter of the Crown Princess Frederick of Germany and the grand-daughter of Queen Victoria. Fortune seemed to smile with singular kindness on a Prince Paladin whose youthful brow already wore a double crown of victory. Yet within much less than a year he was kidnapped at midnight in his palace at Sofia by a small band of mutinous soldiers and conveyed as a State prisoner in his own yacht down the Danube into Russian territory, and though he was released and welcomed back to Bulgaria by the enthusiastic acclamations of the vast majority of his people and his army, he returned only to abdicate and go forth into exile as a final act of self-sacrifice to the nation he had so gallantly led and served. He was convinced that in no other way could he save Bulgaria from paying the penalty of the hatred borne to him by two of the worst haters in Europe – the Tsar Alexander III, who treated him as a rebel against Holy Russia, and Bismarck, for whom his engagement to Princess Victoria constituted the menace of an intolerable mésalliance for the House of Hohenzollern and of a dynastic entanglement devised by Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Germany, 'the Englishwoman' whom he always suspected of plotting to embroil Germany with Russia for the benefit of British foreign policy.

Of that tragic page of history I was an eye-witness, for I was privileged to accompany the Prince on his last journey from Bulgaria, not merely, I think, because I was then acting as correspondent for the *Standard*, but still more because I was an old friend of Sir Frank Lascelles who was at home on leave at the time, but had enjoyed his confidence during the last years of his reign in a greater measure than any other foreign representative at Sofia, and I can reproduce almost in his own words the explanation he then gave

me of a decision of which many of his best friends and warmest admirers doubted the wisdom. The departure from the Bulgarian capital offered a strange spectacle. No railway had then reached Sofia and the nearest railway station was the Serbian terminus at Nish. The victor of Slivnitza naturally wished to avoid Serbian territory. The most convenient alternative was the carriage road over the north-eastern spurs of the Balkans to Lom Palanka on the Danube.

Outside the Palace, then the only modern building of any importance in a capital which had hardly yet outgrown the squalor of a small provincial Turkish town, was drawn up a procession of some fifteen or twenty ramshackle travelling carriages, locally called *Paitons* though much more akin to Victorias than to Phaetons, each with its team of three wiry little horses harnessed, Russian fashion, abreast. Into these were packed the Prince's suite, and, with a few personal friends who had received permission to accompany him, the Bulgarian officials and officers in attendance for the last time upon him. Two State carriages drove out of the Palace courtyard, in the first one the Prince himself with his fondly devoted brother, Prince Franz Joseph of Battenberg, and a great roar of cheering, which had something in it of a deep wail of mourning, arose from the dense mass of people collected in the Square and the adjoining streets to catch a last glimpse of the Prince who had transformed Bulgaria from a geographical expression into a Balkan power with which not only the older Balkan States but the Great Powers of Europe had already to reckon. What was the meaning of this enigmatic flight of a ruler from a country to which he had brought the fulfilment of a large part of its national ambitions, and even more unexpectedly the crown of military victory in the first war waged in desperate self-defence by its young and untried army? Never, perhaps, had his popularity been greater, but bewilderment was almost equally apparent amongst the

crowds that only gradually thinned down as the cortège began to climb the foothills of the Balkans on a hot early autumn afternoon. The further we got away from Sofia the greater was the bewilderment. The peasants whom we passed on the road doffed their caps and stopped to watch the long procession of carriages with obvious amazement. Only in the more important villages had the news of the Prince's departure got ahead of us, but whenever it had done so, parties of villagers and notables turned out, even after dark and far into the night, to salute him as he went by, and wherever we halted for a few minutes to rest or change our horses we were plied with anxious and wondering inquiries. The road was bad, the dust was often suffocating, and the drive over steep and sinuous hills was long and wearisome up to the Petro Han Pass nearly 6,000 feet above the sea and down again into the valley of the Danube. The second day was already well advanced when we at last reached Lom Palanka and the steamer that was waiting to convey the Prince up the Danube to a Rumanian railway station at Turn-Severin. Another large gathering of Bulgarians had hurried from all the adjoining districts, and again at Widdin, where the Prince landed for a couple of hours, the last he ever spent on Bulgarian soil, to appeal once more to the patience and self-restraint of his army and his people whose national interests he could no longer serve except by leaving them, there were signs as there had been at Sofia, not only of passionate grief but of utter uncomprehension. Why, oh why, was the Prince deserting them?

Prince Alexander may have seen some such thoughts lingering in my mind also, when he sent for me to join him as we steamed up the river and soon left the Bulgarian shore far behind us. He asked me at once whether I approved of his decision, but without waiting for an answer he went on to say with the utmost emphasis that it was the only decision at which it had been possible for him conscientiously to arrive. He referred at once to the telegram from the Tsar handed

to him at Rustchuk at the moment when his own people were welcoming him back to Bulgaria after he had been shamefully kidnapped at Russian instigation. That telegram he could only regard as a definite ultimatum, since it told him that Bulgaria would have to take the consequences if he elected to cling to his throne in defiance of the Tsar's wishes. Was it not merely the culminating expression of the relentless hostility which Alexander III had displayed towards him almost from the moment he succeeded to the Russian throne? Many Russian officials in Bulgaria had been disposed from the very first to treat him merely as an instrument of their ambitions, which were not always even very disinterested or reputable ambitions, but so long as Alexander II was living he could always appeal in the last resort to his sense of justice and to his personal good-will and affection which never failed him. But it had always been easy for his ill-wishers at St. Petersburg to excite suspicion of his motives by denouncing him as a German princeling, and though he had come to learn that he had no less an implacable enemy in Berlin, his German origin had always told against him with the powerful Pan-Slavic party in Russia and not least with Alexander III, who leant much more towards them than had Alexander II. The Autocrat of All the Russias could not, of course, openly identify himself with the military conspiracy which his agents had instigated against him, and when the kidnappers took him down the Danube he felt confident that he would be released as soon as he reached Russian territory. But the conspirators had none the less the Tsar behind them. They knew that the Tsar was determined to make his position in Bulgaria untenable – they had done it successfully, though their methods were ostensibly repudiated. 'Do you think that anything could ever wipe out the bitter memory of that midnight invasion of my palace by men whom I had trusted implicitly, who had fought under me against the Serbs, whom I had led to victory, who had carried me on their shoulders with professions of everlasting devotion when we returned

triumphant to Sofia from the battlefield of Slivnitza? That the same men should have laid violent hands upon me within less than a year and subjected me to the most ignominious fate which can overtake a ruler was in itself more than I could well bear.' And when I objected that this had been done by only a very small minority of his officers whilst the vast majority had on the contrary demonstrated their unshakeable devotion to him, he replied bitterly, 'Unshakeable? Would I not have sworn a month ago that ——'s loyalty was unshakeable and do you believe that the loyalty of the others would have remained permanently proof against Russian persuasion and Russian promises? Remember that whatever the Tsar may do, however much the Bulgarian people may at times resent his actions, Alexander III is the son of Alexander II the Tsar Liberator, who waged a great war to release Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke. It is natural enough and I understand the Bulgarian feeling. I fought myself with the Russian army all through that war, but it was not I who made Bulgaria. It was the Tsar. And how can I expect Bulgaria to forget it?' Again I ventured to object and reminded the Prince of the marvellous outburst of enthusiasm with which he had been welcomed back. It was not the Tsar Liberator who had been acclaimed by the Bulgarian people all the way from Rustchuk to Sofia, but Prince Alexander, the conqueror of Slivnitza, the Liberator of Southern Bulgaria. 'Yes,' he rejoined, 'that is true as far as it goes, and do not please think for a moment that I was not deeply touched by the wonderful welcome I received, all the more wonderful in that the Bulgarians are not an outwardly emotional people. But again I am bound to ask myself how long that wave of emotion would have lasted, or whether even it would have been quite so overwhelming had people known of the Tsar's telegram to me. Even if I had not been myself a Russian officer, could I have asked my army to stand up to the Russian forces which could at any moment be landed at Varna or up the Danube. Yet that, I have abundant reason to believe,

would have been the almost immediate result of my refusal to leave Bulgaria at the plain bidding of the Tsar. You may say that the Tsar would never have run the risk of provoking a European war by ordering his army to Bulgaria, but would it have been really a serious risk? Bismarck would not have said him nay. He would merely have acted once more the part of the "honest broker" between Russia and Austria and bargained at somebody else's expense for the latter's acquiescence. Your Queen, it is true, has written me several extremely kind letters full of righteous indignation against Russia and urging me to stand fast.[1] But her ministers whilst expressing the warmest good will have told me frankly that I must not reckon on anything more than their moral support within the limits of peaceful diplomacy. The language of the French and Italian representatives is even more guarded than Lord Salisbury's. True, it has been hinted to me that as against Russia I might perhaps rely upon Turkey's support. But those who imagine such a possibility know nothing of my Bulgarians. It is not ten years yet since Batak [the place where the Turkish Bashi Bozuks perpetrated one of their foulest massacres in 1876], and if I – which God forbid – had asked Bulgarian soldiers to fight side by side with the Turks against the Russians, not one would have followed me. We can get along as peaceful neighbours with the Turks and they with us, but comrades in arms we can never be. It is with the great Powers alone that I have to reckon, and even if I

[1] In his *Life of Prince Alexander*, published in Vienna in 1920, M. Corti, who was allowed to draw on the family archives, reproduces in facsimile one of the Queen's letters written in German to her "*theuerer Sander*" and dated Balmoral Castle, September 4, i.e., on the very day on which he announced his final abdication. One sentence in it gives the measure of her feelings: "*Meine Empörung und Wuth gegen Deinen barbarischen asiatisch-gesinnten tyrannischen Vetter sind so grosz dasz ich mir nicht trauen kann darüber zu schreiben*' – 'My horror and rage against your barbarous asiatic-minded tyrannical cousin [the Tsar Alexander III] are so great that I cannot trust myself to write about it.'

could bring myself to share the illusions which some of my Ministers entertain, I could not have it on my conscience to be the cause or the pretext of a great war. Whatever people may say of me I am not a vulgar adventurer and I was not going to launch Bulgaria into a desperate adventure which would in any case be the end of all her hopes of independence for generations to come. I have served her to the best of my abilities ever since I was her prince and I think history will say that I have deserved well of her. But at the present juncture there is only one service I can render her, and that is to go.'

There was nothing further to be said, and as the Prince rose I could merely ask him whether he would tell me anything about his future plans. His reply was short and his tone almost curt: 'I have nothing to tell you. I have no plans at present except to forget and be forgotten.' Then he shook hands with me quite heartily and with rather a sad smile thanked me for having accompanied his *convoi funèbre*. 'But I shall see you this evening,' he added. 'You will, I hope, go on to the bitter end and see me off at the railway station.' I did so, and I can still see in the dimly lighted station of Turn-Severin Prince Alexander's fine profile leaning out of the carriage window whilst for the last time he listened to Bulgarian cheers from the small knot of faithful ones who had followed him thus far.

I returned to Sofia and saw much of Stambuloff, who was the soul of the Regency during the following months when General Kaulbars, sent by the Tsar to bring the Bulgarians back to their allegiance to Russia, was to discover how little either his blandishments or his threats availed against the stubbornness of a peasant people determined to yield nothing of their rights even to Holy Russia, except under the compulsion of superior force. Stambuloff reflected exactly at that time the temper of the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen. He was a typical Slav with Kalmuk features and keen dark eyes, headstrong and utterly fearless, educated partly in

Russia where he had imbibed, together with strong Pan-Slavonic sympathies, something of the aspirations of the young Russian intelligentsia to political freedom, and at the same time old enough to remember the days of the Turkish oppression against which he had fought as a lad and to talk vigorous Turkish to the remnants of the old Turkish population whom he was wise enough to wish to conciliate. The situation, however, was not an easy one. General Kaulbars preambulated the country dragging his coat-tails, and when he left in high dudgeon at his failure to bring the Bulgarians to their senses all the Russian Consuls were withdrawn and Russian war-ships rode at anchor off Varna, whilst Hitrovo, the Russian Minister at Bukarest, using Rumanian territory as a convenient base, continued to foment conspiracies and disturbances which kept Bulgaria unsettled, though Stambuloff crushed them with a high hand. He still hoped to get Prince Alexander back, but he realized the danger of allowing the throne to remain indefinitely vacant. The Prince was not, however, to be moved, even when Bismarck once conveyed to him that Germany's attitude might be different if he would break off his engagement to Princess Victoria. But he held that it was for her and not for him to do it, and neither she nor her mother would hear of it, and not till after the Emperor Frederick's death did the engagement come to an end by mutual consent in view of William II's peremptory veto.

Meanwhile, and mainly to gain time, the Bulgarian National Assembly even elected Prince Waldemar of Denmark, and when he declined, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary was sounded. At last, after further fruitless appeals to Prince Alexander, an official deputation travelled to Germany in the summer of 1886, and it was characteristically enough in the discreet seclusion of a private box at his favourite music hall in Vienna that the Coburger struck his bargain with the Bulgarian envoys. The attitude of the great Powers towards his candidature had been generally non-

committal. Russia alone was openly hostile, but Prince Ferdinand was confident that if he was once elected, she would not risk provoking an acute European crisis merely in order to turn him out. His diplomacy would be a match for hers and, as he himself airily remarked: '*Aprés tout, si je suis la puce dans l'oreille de l'ours – la chose n'en sera pas moins amusante.*'

He was not a soldier as Prince Alexander was – nor was he the man to have the scruples which Prince Alexander had as to provoking a European conflagration. I saw him at Sofia shortly after he had been proclaimed Prince of Bulgaria, though without much enthusiasm, by the National Assembly at Tirnova. His features, and more especially his nose, betrayed his partly Jewish descent, whilst his tired and somewhat furtive eyes were those of the *viveur* he had been known to be in Vienna. His figure, already slightly inclined to corpulence, seemed slightly ill at ease in his brand-new Bulgarian uniform, and something in his manner and pose reminded one that he was not only a Kohary but a great-grandson of Philippe Egalité. He received me with an air of affable condescension, and with that curious slightly high-pitched nasal drawl, which he affected, he opened the conversation by saying: '*Il me revient, Monsieur, que vous êtes un grand admirateur de mon malheureux prédecesseur.*' I replied that it was so, and he put to me some searching questions concerning Prince Alexander and his abdication. I defended his action, which he professed to be at a loss to understand, and I added that his motives appeared to have been very widely misunderstood – partly perhaps because his enemies had always decried him as a mere adventurer who had overreached himself, whereas his greatest qualities were '*des qualités de coeur plutôt que de tête.*' Prince Ferdinand, who was toying all the time with some precious stones which he held caressingly in his hand, looked me straight in the face and speaking for once the truth, remarked dryly: '*Eh bien Monsieur, l'histoire ne dira pas cela de moi.*'

For the first few years of his reign and so long as Russia continued to boycott him and to foment fresh conspiracies and disturbances in Bulgaria, Prince Ferdinand was constrained to go on leaning on Stambuloff. But he hated leaning on anyone, and he soon began to hate the plebeian Minister he had to lean on. Stambuloff on his side began to betray his impatience of the '*airs de petit Bourbon*' that his new master gave himself. When Turkey and most of the Great Powers had recognized Prince Ferdinand, Russia alone remained to be propitiated, and it was notorious that Stambuloff, who held Russia in check after Prince Alexander had left Bulgaria, was even more hateful to the Tsar than that unfortunate Prince had ever been. The Bulgarian politicians aspiring to office were quick to realize that hostility to Stambuloff was the surest way to curry favour at the Palace. It was no longer Stambuloff but the Prince who controlled the Press, and its most savage attacks were now directed against a 'disloyal' Prime Minister. One of Stambuloff's most intimate friends, and a loyal colleague, was murdered – and by the merest accident instead of him – whilst they were walking together in the streets of Sofia. There were many stormy scenes between the Prince and his Prime Minister before the latter was at last driven to resign. Even after he had resigned Ferdinand did not feel safe as long as the man remained alive in Sofia, and yet he was afraid to allow him to go abroad. One day the Government organ, the *Mir*, published an article declaring that there would be no salvation for Bulgaria 'until Stambuloff's bones were torn from his flesh,' and on the very next day (July 15, 1895) he was fallen on by hired assassins as he was coming home from the Union Club and so frightfully mutilated that he died three days afterwards. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy he had made to me a short time before when I was passing through Bulgaria. I saw him then for the last time. He thanked me for my visit as it was, he said, 'an act of no slight courage in such times to come and visit a prisoner under sentence of death,' for the Prince had let it be known

that 'there is no room for us to be both alive in Sofia,' and yet refused to let him leave. Before I said good-bye he gave me his photograph and, as there was no black ink handy, signed his name to it in red ink, symbolical, he said bitterly, of what lay in front of him; 'for I know quite well that it will be with the red ink of my blood that my name will soon be signed in history.' When Ferdinand's wishes, if not his actual orders, had been carried out, he had little difficulty in making his peace with Russia. He had paid the price for it by sacrificing the great Bulgarian patriot who with all his faults, and they were many, had vindicated his country's claim to national independence, and had given him his throne and made it safe for him. All that Ferdinand had yet to do was to get his son and heir Prince Boris baptized into the Orthodox Church in breach of the promise which he had given on his own faith as a Catholic Prince to the Emperor Francis Joseph and then pay a state visit of submission to the Tsar Alexander III.

Prince Ferdinand was now master in his own house and remained so for upwards of thirty years. His astute brain knew how to promote both the material development of the country and the growth of extravagant national ambitions, whilst consolidating his personal power by Macchiavellian methods which steadily demoralized not only the politically-minded classes, but even the masses, in a country whose people are endowed with more solid if less attractive qualities than any other in the Balkan peninsula. Popularity he never achieved, nôr perhaps cared to, for the Bulgarians are a democratic people and he despised democracies. His love of pomp and state impressed his subjects, but there was much in his manner of life that was repugnant to them, and though they only dared to talk of it in whispers, it was commonly believed in Sofia that the avenue to his personal favour, and to political influence, lay mostly through unspeakable paths. When his first wife, a Bourbon Princess of Parma, died, the Bulgarian people to whom her kindliness and piety had endeared her, were convinced that she had died of a broken

heart. The Prince's one redeeming point was his affection for his mother, who until her death spent the greater part of her time with him at Sofia and spread a mantle of respectability and dignity over the new Court. Princess Clementine of Orleans was a very striking personality. Her inherited ambitions were entirely centred in her son, and he was clever enough to draw upon her sagacity and long experience in the larger fields of European statecraft, which she had studied at close quarters, for she had many friends in high places. She did not quite live to fulfil her dream of seeing her son exalted to full kingship, for she died in 1907, and it was the annexation of Bosnia and Herzogovina to the Hapsburg dominions in 1908 which gave him the opportunity he had been long waiting for of proclaiming the independence of Bulgaria and of bestowing on himself a kingly title. There had been Bulgarian Tsars in olden times, but when he decided to style himself Tsar of Bulgaria he was not merely appealing to the national traditions of his people, but, as he confided to one of his friends, he was placing himself as a Tsar on an equal plane with the Autocrat of all the Russias – who had so long held him at arm's length. I was at Sofia soon after that event, and even some of my old Bulgarian acquaintances who had no love for him admitted that the country was immensely, and rightly, proud of a great achievement by which Bulgaria had at last secured the full status of a sovereign and independent State. For Ferdinand himself, nothing afforded him greater satisfaction than to be able at last to visit the chief European Courts as a royal sovereign. But at most of them he was regarded as a parvenu, and when he came to London for the King's coronation two of his brother sovereigns made no disguise of their feelings towards him. He turned almost savagely upon the King of Portugal: '*Riez, riez mon cher cousin, je suis en effet un roi d'hier, mais êtes-vous bien sur d'être un roi de demain*?' It was a prophetic jibe.

The first Balkan war brought him almost within sight of the goal which his imagination had set before him from the

very beginning of his reign. From the windows of his Palace he looked out upon the mountains stretching southwards to Macedonia, and in the course of my first interview with him he had pointed to them with a large sweep of the hand: 'You see I hold the key of Macedonia in my pocket, and Macedonia means the Turkish Empire – at least in Europe.' He was not cut out for a battlefield and he took no personal part in the amazing victories which brought the Bulgarian armies almost to the gates of Constantinople, but at one moment he saw himself so clearly making a triumphant entry into Byzantium that he ordered at Venice a splendid mosaic to show him riding a white charger up to the door of Sant Sophia. The vision was shattered when the Bulgarian onrush was checked and Serbian and Greek troops had to be called in aid to eject the Turks even from Adrianople. Great was Ferdinand's mortification at the final results of the first Balkan war, though they brought no mean aggrandisement to his kingdom, and when the Balkan allies fell out over the spoils, it was Ferdinand who in a rash moment issued orders to his generals which precipitated the second Balkan war to Bulgaria's undoing. It was he who more rashly still dragged his people three years later into the Great War as the allies not only of the Germanic Empires, but of their ancient oppressors, the Turks. For two years he doubtless congratulated himself on having taken the winning side, and once the Hohenzollern War-lord 'in shining armour' paid him a State visit at which they settled the future distribution of the spoils of victory. But again Nemesis overtook his vaulting ambitions. In 1918 Bulgaria was the first of the 'enemy' countries to sue for peace, and King Ferdinand fled the country which he had brought to ruin. Did it occur to him at that moment to remember his *malheureux prédecesseur* who had preferred to resign his throne rather than to plunge Bulgaria into the vortex of a great European war?

CHAPTER IX

THE PASSING OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

I NEVER spent so long a time again in Turkey as in 1880–81, but in the course of many subsequent visits I was able to watch the extraordinary success with which for more than twenty-five years Abdul Hamid continued to prosecute his two-fold policy of concentrating within his Palace the whole civil and military government of the Ottoman Empire, and of making Yeldiz at the same time a shining beacon to attract the devotion of all orthodox Mohammedans, outside as well as inside the Empire, to the Ottoman Caliphate. No less adroit was his resistance to outside pressure whenever it took the shape of renewed demands for administrative reforms in Turkey. He knew how to play with unerring skill on the jealousies within the concert of the European Powers, which he reduced to a *concert des impuissances*, even before William II threw his mantle over him and, during his spectacular tour to Syria in 1898, did homage to his august ally 'whom 300,000,000 Mohammedans throughout the world revere as their Caliph,' and obtained in return the promise of the Bagdad railway concession which was to carry German penetration right down to the Persian Gulf – and this at the time when the whole of Europe was horrified by the first Armenian massacres which initiated the long course of massacres and deportations that were to make Asia Minor safe for the ruling Turkish race. Nor did Abdul Hamid disdain the smaller arts of diplomacy. When he liked he could coo as gently as any sucking dove. He was full of delicate personal attentions for the diplomatic corps and not least for the ladies that belonged to it. He had at Yeldiz a theatre at which European performances were given for their benefit, and on more intimate occasions he would have his favourite daughter brought in to show off before them on the piano the 'up-to-date' education

he was giving her. From the spacious grounds of Yeldiz, within which he had his own little railway train and a small steam launch on a miniature lake, he only emerged to conduct the Friday prayers at his own mosque close by, to which, between a double line of troops, he drove himself in a smart carriage and pair, whilst a long tail of Pashas struggled up the hill on foot behind him, puffing and perspiring in their full uniforms heavy with gold lace. Whilst the Sultan transacted all the more important business of the State through his secretariat at Yeldiz, composed more and more largely of Syrians and Albanians and Circassians and other nationalities, to the almost complete exclusion of the Turkish element, his Ministers, whether Turks or non-Turks, were reduced to the position of mere heads of departments who, when summoned to Yeldiz to take their orders, were given a particular route for them to follow between the Sublime Porte and the Palace, with a Palace official or spy on the box of each carriage to see that they did not deviate from it, or to report the reason why they did.

For a long time Abdul Hamid was able to boast that no dog could bark within his Empire without his hearing it. Of the ubiquity of his secret police I myself, on one occasion, had ample evidence. Since my journey in Thessaly and Macedonia with Selami Pasha in 1880 I had always kept in touch with him. Being in Constantinople for a few days in 1894, I called upon him in the quiet little house in which he was living since his retirement, many years previously, in Stambul. He was out and I left a message asking him to let me know if I should have a chance of finding him in on another day. I was staying with friends in the European quarter at Pera, and during dinner on the same evening I was told that a Turkish gentleman was outside who wished to speak to me. He would not give his name, but he had been sent by his father, upon whom I had called in the afternoon. I then learnt from him that a couple of hours after my visit Secret Service men had been sent to find out who Selami Pasha's European

visitor had been and what was his business, and they had only retired after receiving a present in return for which they had sternly warned him 'not to do it again.' The Pasha, therefore, begged me not to go near his house, but as he was very anxious to see me, he proposed that we should meet at a secluded spot at Scutari on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus. We met accordingly, and whilst we were walking up and down amongst the cypresses of an old Turkish graveyard the old man poured out his troubles to me and called down the wrath of Heaven on the ruler who was steering Turkey to her ruin. 'You foreigners,' he said, 'do not know what he is doing. You do not know how he has built up his tyranny on the twin pillars of corruption and delation, setting brother against brother and son against father, so that there is barely anyone left whom an honest man can trust.' And in a final explosion of righteous indignation he pointed the finger of scorn in the direction of Yeldiz, which lay opposite to us on the European side of the Bosporus. '*Buyuk bir bokluk dir.* It is a huge cesspool,' he exclaimed, and spat solemnly on the ground.

On another occasion I had a less tragic illustration of the curious network of spies with which Government officials were encompassed all over the Empire. Even ladies detached from Abdul Hamid's female establishments were employed to keep an eye on them. When I was once again in Syria, I called upon the *Mutessarif* of an important district of whom I had seen a good deal in Constantinople. He had been educated in France, and after some years in the public service, he had been sent into honourable exile from the capital because he was suspected of entertaining liberal opinions. Whilst I was talking to him I heard a little Turkish drum being vigorously beaten in an apartment on the other side of the courtyard, doubtless reserved for the ladies of the *hareem.* I suppose I showed some surprise at the insistence with which the drumming went on; for my friend jerked his finger in the direction from which it proceeded and leaning forward, whispered to me,

'Do you know what that means? His Imperial Majesty, being specially solicitous for my official welfare, has deigned to present me with a charming lady who played the drum in his private band of female musicians. She is in a temper to-day because I refused her something, and when she has a *crise de nerfs* she beats the drum until I give way. And how can I help giving way? For she is not only very attractive, but can pull the wires on which my fortunes depend at Yeldiz.'

There were, however, two weak points in Abdul Hamid's armour; a strong vein of superstition and a constant dread of assassination. Upon both no one played so successfully as a *fakir* – possibly the same one who had first read the youthful Abdul Hamid's star – who was for many years an intimate member of his household. He was a strange, repulsive-looking creature, almost a negro; but messages direct from Heaven dropped at auspicious moments into his favoured hands, and he alone could interpret them for the edification of his Imperial patron, whom they greatly impressed. Just as for the instruments of his most secret policy Abdul Hamid preferred non-Turks rather than Turks, so he chose for the Praetorian Guard that watched over his safety in Constantinople battalions recruited amongst the Circassians and Albanians and Kurds and Arabs of his Empire, rather than amongst full-blooded Turks. He was not in any case a fighter and trusted to his diplomatic manœuvres to avoid the risk, which he wisely never underrated, of putting his throne to the hazard of a European war. What he did ultimately underrate were other dangers that eluded even his crafty vision. On the one hand the large numbers whom he interned or drove into exile on the merest suspicion of liberal opinions or of opposition of any kind to his imperious will, created in various parts of his Empire, as well as in the capitals of Western Europe, dangerous centres of disaffection prepared to join in a revolution, whilst on the other hand he gradually alienated the army, which, outside the Constantinople garrison, had no reason to love him, by the successive concessions

which, with all his diplomacy, he was slowly driven to make at the expense of Turkish national pride to the combined pressure of some of the Powers. The situation in Macedonia had become intolerable, and if England, Russia and Austria were otherwise an ill-assorted team that seldom pulled heartily together, Abdul Hamid's obstinacy quailed before the immediate menace of war in the heart of the Balkans.

He had already sat too long on the safety valve. The explosion took place in July, 1908, at first in the Turkish Army Corps in Macedonia, where the leaders – amongst them Enver, who afterwards acquired a more unenviable notoriety – were ready to co-operate with a revolutionary group at Salonika that was the nucleus of the Committee of Union and Progress. Abdul Hamid saved his throne for a time by agreeing to resuscitate the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, and forming a new ministry with the aged Kiamil Pasha, a veteran reformer long in disgrace, as Grand Vizier, and two Christians, one a Greek and one an Armenian, as Ministers. I was in Constantinople when the freshly-elected Parliament assembled in a delirium of popular enthusiasm. Liberty and fraternity was the popular watchword. Mollahs and priests and deputations of all classes and creeds, Mohammedans, Christians and Jews, and processions of students and school children paraded the streets singing the new Hymn of the Constitution, stopping to cheer frantically every person who was supposed to have had a hand in, or to have been in sympathy with, the revolution. It was a glorious honeymoon, and few who witnessed it, myself included, were not swept for a time off their feet by such a spontaneous and unanimous demonstration of national faith, hope and charity. But the honeymoon did not last long, nor had Abdul Hamid's claws yet been thoroughly clipped. Many Young Turks were convinced that the revolution would never be safe so long as he was even nominally Sultan, but the more conservative shrank from deposing him; for where was there a successor who would curb their own hot-heads.

The next in succession to him was his younger brother

Reshad, who had been for the last thirty years a prisoner of state in a palace on the Bosporus, with a Turkish man-of-war to see that he did not escape by water and a horde of spies to watch over all his movements and see that he did not escape by land. A Turkish friend arranged that I should pay him a visit, but the vigilance of Yeldiz had been so little relaxed that the visit had to be secret. I went to him after nightfall and wearing a fez, and in an old Palace brougham successfully borrowed on some pretence or other for the occasion. The poor old man's appearance and manner showed how much he had suffered, and not merely from physical confinement, during those thirty years. He himself pointed to the marks of thumb-screws on his hands, though he doubted whether his brother was directly responsible for them. The welcome he gave me was like that of a very shy schoolboy who wanted to convince me that he was really 'a good sort.' After coffee and tea and Turkish sweets, to which he himself helped me repeatedly, had been brought in by the only servant whom he professed to be able to trust, we were alone for over an hour. He told me I was the first foreigner with whom he had had speech for thirty years, and for the last ten years he had not been allowed to see any newspapers and only such books as the Palace censorship permitted. He had known nothing of what was going on in the outside world or in Turkey except what his jailers chose to tell him. Hence his delight when he had heard that an Englishman was coming to visit him, for he had always liked the few Englishmen he had known; they had always told the truth, and would I, please, also tell him the truth about everything. He thereupon plied me with questions of every sort, and though his ignorance of everything that was of common knowledge outside his gilded prison was pathetic, his remarks were often quite sensible and showed a kindly disposition. I could certainly detect no traces of the drunkenness and depravity to which he was supposed to have succumbed. That Abdul Hamid, who always hesitated to inflict an actual death sentence, had

had every temptation put in his way which would have shortened his life, I do not doubt, but he had been saved, as his friends declared and he himself incidentally confirmed, by the devotion of a daughter who had been left to bear him company, and perhaps also by his taste for poetry which had enabled him to kill many dreary hours by writing Turkish verses. He was clearly aware that he might be called upon at any moment to succeed his brother, though he prayed with all appearance of sincerity he should be spared so heavy a burden. 'I am a poor ignorant old man,' he said more than once, 'and have no experience of affairs.' And then he would add, 'I will be at any rate a good master to my people and give peace to them. God is my witness that all I ask for and all I desire is peace.' Great, however, was the fear that was still on him, for he would constantly look nervously round the room and, as if every wall might have ears, lean suddenly forward and sink his voice to a mere whisper. I could not but be moved to deep pity for him, but when I left him after he had thanked me over and over again for a visit which he assured me had put new life into him, I had to admit how utterly unequal he must prove to such a damnable inheritance as Abdul Hamid's, should it ever be forced upon his feeble shoulders.

Within less than a year it was. For internal dissensions soon began to break out amongst the supporters of the new regime, and Abdul Hamid imagined that the hour was ripe for a counter-revolution. He was, however, rapidly undeceived, and though there was actually a few hours' severe fighting in Constantinople itself between Albanian troops who remained loyal to him and the Salonika army that hurried to the rescue of the revolution, he was finally deposed on April 22, 1909, and removed a few days later to Salonika, the birthplace of the revolution, where he died in captivity during the first Balkan War just before the city was occupied by the Greek army. The unfortunate Reshad Effendi was proclaimed Sultan with the style of Mahomet V, but merely

to be a figurehead, whilst all real power passed into the hands of the Committee of Union and Progress. In the early days they had talked abundantly about liberty and fraternity, but less about equality between the different races, which soon disappeared even more completely from their programme. The policy which they called Ottomanization was in effect directed to restore the supremacy of the ruling Turk, and the pre-eminence of the military caste, which Abdul Hamid's power had to some extent overshadowed. Pan-Islamism retired, but only temporarily, into the background. Germany quickly recovered her ascendancy, though under the first impact of the revolution it had been shaken by the compromising intimacy that had so long existed between William II and Abdul Hamid. After the first Balkan War German diplomacy was fain to seek British co-operation in rescuing the Ottoman Empire in Europe from the worst penalties of defeat, which were further lightened after Ferdinand of Bulgaria had precipitated a fratricidal struggle between the Balkan States for the redistribution of the spoils. When Germany succeeded in bringing Turkey into the Great War as her ally, the puppet Sultan was at once told to remember that he was Caliph, and to proclaim the *Jehad*, or Holy War, against the Allies. It produced scarcely any effect at the time, but I witnessed a few years later in India the aftermath of Hamidian Pan-Islamism in the frenzy of the Caliphate movement which for a time brought Indian Mohammedans and Hindus into line in a turbulent agitation that derived as much from hatred of British rule as from confidence in Mustapha Pasha's power to wield the sword of Islam and in Turkey's ability to act as the spear-head of Asia against Europe.

The old Ottoman Empire, which had lost the war, passed away when the men of Angora who had won the peace at Lausanne abolished the Sultanate and shortly afterwards the Caliphate. The new and lay republic boasts of having cast off the dead cerements of autocracy and theocracy, and of being intensely modern and democratic. It conforms unques-

tionably to the very latest type, for it excludes liberty, which Bolshevism regards as unhealthy for real democracy. It prefers a Dictator whose powers are in effect scarcely less than Abdul Hamid's. Mustapha Kemal is President of the Republic, President of the Grand National Assembly, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and he has his Tribunals of Independence which, like the Russian *Cheka*, mete out condign punishment to counter-revolutionaries, and Mr. Spender tells us that when he was recently at Angora his bedroom window at the hotel looked immediately on the place of public executions, though, fortunately for him, during the few days he was there, none happened to take place. He still tolerates a Turkish Parliament, but he has eliminated all opposition parties from it, and he has suppressed all free speech and all newspapers that do not give him the fullest support. Like the Bolshevists, he has set his face against religion, and he has abolished the *tekkes* and confiscated most of the revenues of the *Wakf*, which were held to be, in theory at least, sacred, and Mohammedan law is no longer administered in the law courts but only civil law, and justice seems to be as rarely done under the latter as under the former. Equality for all creeds has been proclaimed in principle and is fairly easy of practice as far as the Christians are concerned, as there are scarcely any left to-day in Turkey after a systematic process of extirpation by deportation and expulsion and massacre initiated by Abdul Hamid and carried out with even greater thoroughness during the Great War and the Greek War. He has abolished the turban and the fez, and the people who would have been shot five years ago for wearing European headgear are shot to-day for not wearing it. The women have discarded *yashmak* and *feridji* and go about unveiled and unashamed in European clothes. He has turned his back on Constantinople and proposes to convert the ramshackle and evil-smelling old city of Angora into a modern capital worthy of a modern republic. The highest Turkish officials who formerly showed little diligence in the transaction of business at the Sublime

Porte now work quite a number of hours every day at their offices in Angora, but they spend a good part of the night jazzing and drinking hard, as a symbol, no doubt, of thorough modernity. Behind all this there may be a genuine belief that a complete and spectacular breach with the past can alone make a new Turkey, which must be judged not by the present stage of violent and sometimes grotesque transition but by future achievements which are still in the womb of time. The dead Ottoman Empire will be mourned by few who have seen as much of it as I happen to have done. But, though I am no pessimist, I fail as yet to foresee any great future for a race which at one time ruled Eastern and South-Eastern and even part of Central Europe up to the gates of Vienna, and many of the finest regions of Western Asia and Northern Africa, but ruled so abominably that it has dwindled into a petty Asiatic state with a diminishing population of barely nine millions, whose immediate destinies appear to be bound up with the life of a single man, be he even a born leader of men.

CHAPTER X

ACROSS PERSIA IN 1884

THE occasion of my first visit to Persia in 1884 was peculiar, and as I look back upon it now, not devoid of humour. In the European race for armaments the Nordenfelt quick-firing machine-guns were then holding the lead, and Nordenfelt, a Swede by birth but established for many years in England, was a man of imagination as well as enterprise, whose acquaintance I had made when he was doing business with Turkey. The East appealed to him, and having bethought himself of Persia as a field still untrodden by his competitors, he consulted the Persian Minister in London, who gave him every encouragement, but suggested that, as a preliminary, it might be well for him to send out a suitable representative to Teheran with a machine-gun for presentation to his august Sovereign the Shah, so as to enlist His Majesty's personal interest in the matter. Nordenfelt, knowing my *Wanderlust* and trusting to the experience I had already gained of Eastern ways and customs, asked me whether I would undertake that mission. Persia was still for me a name to conjure with, and I accepted the offer. The first question was how to convey the gun to Teheran. The shortest and most convenient route in those days would have been through Russia and across the Caspian to the Persian port of Enzeli and thence by road, if it could be called a road, to the Persian capital. But the Russian Government, being unwilling to encourage the introduction of modern weapons of war into Persia, the only available route was by the Persian Gulf to Bushire, where I was to take charge of it and see to its safe conveyance by land through Shiraz and Isfahan to Teheran.

I have entered and left Persia since then by other routes, but none so striking or so trying for man and beast as the great mountain staircase which from Boghazjun, signifying the

Mouth of the Pass, a good two days' march from Bushire, leads up from the Persian Gulf to Shiraz, over 5,000 feet above the sea. Each huge step of the *Kohtals* is a steep cliff sometimes 1,000 to 1,500 feet high. The rough tracks are often nothing more than a narrow water-course strewn with huge boulders, and for miles together riding was out of the question, for there is a limit even to the sure-footedness of the small country-bred pony. My chief concern was, however, for the gun which had had to be taken to pieces and carefully packed in strong wooden cases to stand the wear and tear of a long journey on pack saddles. But Persian pack animals, horses or mules, are accustomed to climb like cats, keeping instinctively to the outer edge of the track though it may fall away several hundred feet sheer, lest by keeping on the inside they should bump against the projecting rocks and be thrown off their delicate balance. For them, certainly the slithering descent is more trying than the steepest ascent, and at particularly awkward corners the indefatigable muleteer will seize his beast at the right moment by the tail and hang on to it, sometimes stemming both his feet against a rock so as to make the brake more effective. And this was called a 'royal road'. During the first two days' climb the sunshine was pleasantly hot, but as we struggled up the third and highest step of the mountain ladder, we were back into mid-winter, heavy snow underfoot and dark clouds discharging downpours of frozen rain or driving hail, with the pealing of thunder and vivid lightning all around. The scenery all the way up was very striking, but more by its wildness and desolation than by its beauty. The intense solitude was oppressive. Never a trace of human habitation, except perhaps a broken-down and deserted caravanserai, between the one I left in the morning till I reached another in the evening, and these owed their existence to the Indo-European telegraph, carried from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf with stations all along the line at intervals of from thirty to eighty miles, where a European employee had to be kept to control and maintain the working of his own section.

It was on these men's hospitality that one relied for a night's shelter, not only in the mountains between Bushire and Shiraz, but also in the great empty plateaus between Shiraz and Isfahan, and Isfahan and Teheran. In those days they were mostly old R.E. sergeants or corporals who had been originally lent by the Government of India to build the line – good fellows mostly, and always ready to give the passing traveller a clean room and wholesome fare, nowhere more welcome because nowhere more rare than in Persia. But theirs was a very weary life. Some were keen sportsmen; one had used his surroundings and his leisure to study the flora and the fauna of the country so thoroughly that he was a corresponding member of learned European Societies; a few unfortunately had completely run to seed and sought to drown an overwhelming sense of loneliness in drink. All, nevertheless, were typical of these remote outposts of empire of which the very existence is almost unknown to the untravelled Briton.

From the highest point of the great mountain staircase two rather shallower steps led down into returning sunshine and the broad plain on which stands Shiraz, the home of Hafiz and Sadi, of the melodious Persian nightingale and of the fragrant Persian roses. The graves of the poets were there and the roses flowered in the neighbouring gardens, but in a shrunken and decaying Shiraz where was the Persia I had come out to see? Shiraz was for me the worst, possibly because the first, of my many disillusionments in a land which had made a stronger appeal to my imagination than any other Eastern country I had read of in my childhood. In Persia there was doubtless a world of mystics and poets, of philosophers and metaphysicians, in whom Professor Browne has seen the mighty spirit of a people 'dreaming the dream of the soul's disentanglement.' But it was a world that had so long steeped itself in the atmosphere of opium smoke which, he admits, seemed to be essential to its transcendental visions, that it was entirely divorced from the world of realities, and, as I saw those realities then

and in all my other travels in Persia, they told only of a world of gross corruption and callous oppression amongst the ruling classes, and of dull misery and suffering amongst the patient masses. Nowhere was the contrast between the past and the present more eloquent than at Persepolis, on the first stage of my journey from Shiraz to Isfahan, with its noble remains of ancient palaces and splendid bas-reliefs and huge carven bulls that have gazed forth for countless centuries on new dynasties succeeding the old and one era of ruin overtaking another. Much has been done since then to excavate its great piles from the sand in which they were still partly buried, but a friendly Dutchman who had kept me so far company on the way took a malicious pleasure in pointing out to me a great bas-relief along the broad staircase leading up to the Hall of Audience, on which the ancient Persians could be seen bearing their propitiatory gifts to the feet of the King of Kings. 'In those days,' my friend remarked, 'he was called Darius, to-day he is called Nasr-ed-Din Shah and he dwells in Teheran, but you will find that he too can only be approached by those who bear presents.' To which I replied that that was exactly what I proposed to do. 'Yes,' he rejoined, 'but I should be surprised if you got permission to present your gift without having to pay pretty heavily for being privileged to do so.' My Dutchman was prophetic.

Persia has been aptly described as a succession of small deserts within a big desert. The rest of the journey from Shiraz to Isfahan consisted of long and mostly desolate stretches, some of which had been at one time irrigated and cultivated. But the *bunds* in which the winter rains had once been stored where they descended from the loftier hills, and the underground *kanats* which had conveyed them to the thirsty fields, had for the most part fallen long since into disuse, the population had disappeared, the cultivation had ceased. Travelling, however, was relatively easy, for the one public service controlled at least indirectly by the State, namely, the provision of post horses for travellers at stated intervals along the road,

was still moderately efficient. At Shiraz I entrusted my machine-gun and my heavier baggage to a caravan which I was assured could be trusted to reach Isfahan within a fortnight, and I travelled, as it was called, *chappar*, i.e. on post horses which I relayed at each *chappar* station along the road at intervals of from twenty to thirty miles – one horse for myself, one for my Persian servant, a rascal who, if he fleeced me on his own account, undertook not to allow me to be too mercilessly fleeced by others, and a third for a post boy who rode from one station to the next carrying most of my light kit in the huge saddle-bags which he bestrode with great skill. On one occasion when I asked my post boy his name he described himself proudly as Shah-Zadeh, or Son of a Shah. Nor was there anything very extraordinary in this, for the great Fath-Ali Shah who reigned at the beginning of the last century is reputed to have had over a thousand children, and many of them and their descendants, all equally entitled to call themselves Shah-Zadehs, had gradually sunk from generation to generation in the social scale. The country, like nearly the whole of Persia, was very sparsely populated, but there were occasional villages and small towns, mostly walled sufficiently to keep off small bands of predatory outlaws, and possessing a fairly large caravanserai which affords shelter for the night to man and beast, but otherwise even fewer amenities than a Turkish *han*. Overhanging the gateway, however, there was usually one apartment called the *bala-khaneh* (whence our word balcony), consisting of one or two rooms rather more spacious and kept a trifle more clean for favoured guests. One of these I was often fortunate enough to occupy, and there I spread my light camp bed with a bag replenished with fresh straw as a mattress, and, to make up the furniture, a camp stool and perhaps a wooden bench which my servant managed to borrow somewhere. Rice and eggs were generally but not always forthcoming on the premises, and these I supplemented now and then with soup tablets or potted meats or sardines from the very slender store I was able to carry with me. Then

as more often than not there were, besides a window, one or two holes or crevices in the walls of my sleeping chamber, I had plenty of fresh air and never suffered from sleeplessness during my short hours of rest. The 'false dawn' – that marvellous moment of which I have never seen the equal outside Persia, when the Eastern sky glows with a suffused light as if the sun were already rising and then pales once more as if the sun had thought better of it – was the signal to be up and about again just in time to see the real sunrise.

Once on a particularly desolate stage with the sun beating down out of a cloudless sky, I happened on to one of the sights which bring home to one the primitive methods by which law and order are apt to be maintained in truly Oriental countries. Some way ahead on the broad level track worn by countless caravans, which had of course no milestones or signposts, I descried a big post about man high, and as I rode up to it I saw what had been a human face and shoulders rising out of it. The wretched man, who may or may not have been, as I was afterwards told, a notorious brigand, had been forced down into a hollow column built up of closely-piled stones into which cement had been afterwards poured up to nearly his shoulders. There he had been left to live for another few hours, until myriads of flies settling down on his face or the swifter mercies of birds of prey put an end to his torture. This barbarous form of execution was already at that time only rarely applied, but to have seen it once was a vision sufficiently horrible to give one a measure of what an Eastern despotism may mean; and Central Persia was then ruled by an exceptionally strong man who had just deputed one of his most vigorous henchmen to put down a particularly bad outbreak of local brigandage. Neither my Persian servant nor the post boy who was riding that stage with me was in the least horrified, or even manifested any concern. For them the law had only taken its appointed course, and as they knew what brigandage could mean for inoffensive travellers on the royal roads

of Persia, they preferred when they met a brigand to meet him safely 'walled up.' *Allah Kerim!* God is the All-Merciful!

The days were already getting very hot in Central Persia, and for the last hundred miles before reaching Teheran I rode right through the night under a brilliant full moon. At one of the *chappar* stations I dismounted rather wearily and sat down on some packing cases outside the caravanserai for the usual quarter of an hour's wait. I was feeling very drowsy but was roused by an extremely foul smell. And no wonder, for I discovered that the cases contained the bones of pious Persians which were being conveyed on their last trek from their temporary graves in far-away Khorassan to be reinterred in their final resting place at Meshed in Mesopotamia. This is the common practice amongst Shia Mohammedans who can afford it, for they hold the soil at Meshed to have been hallowed for ever by the martyrdom of Ali, the fourth and according to their creed the last of the Caliphs in legitimate succession to the Prophet. The Turks used to levy a large revenue from these funereal caravans when they crossed the frontier, and my Persian servant had a grim story to tell about an attempt once made to evade these exactions. Some enterprising Persians had the bones entrusted to them ground down into a sort of powder which they passed into Turkey as imported flour. The trick got to the ears of the Turkish Governor at Meshed and sending for the delinquent Persians he told them that he had heard something of the wonderful flour that they were bringing into the country and he would like them to bake some of it into bread and eat it in his presence. The men had then perforce to confess their ghoulish fraud and, being anyhow heretics, they were promptly put to death.

The sun had risen by the time I rode down from a last barren ridge of low hills into the great plain of Isfahan and caught my first glimpse of the ancient city, with its domes

and minarets still far away beyond a sea of pale green fields which were opium poppy fields, then ripening into full bloom. Partly, I suppose, because I was tired from the long night's ride, the heavy scent of the flowers of sleep went to my head, and, whilst the weariness seemed to go out of my limbs, I rode for nearly an hour in a trance of pleasant stupor, out of which I was only roused by the furious barking of the dogs in the first suburb of the city. Less agreeable was the ride I still had before me, mostly through deserted quarters and bazaars in ruin, before I reached the sheltered house of the Telegraph Inspector who had kindly offered to put me up – an old Persian house with spacious chambers opening on to an inner courtyard bright with flowers and cool with bubbling fountains.

Nasr-ed-Din, who was accounted a strong ruler of the despotic type, was and had been since 1848 the Persian Shah of Shahs reigning at Teheran. But he had gradually delegated so much of his authority to his favourite son, the Zill-es-Sultan, who was not, however, the legitimate heir to the throne, that the latter had become the *de facto* ruler of the whole of Central and Southern Persia. The Government of India regarded him as specially friendly to our interests and attached greater importance to British influence in Southern Persia than in the North where the British Minister at Teheran, who received his instructions from the Foreign Office, dealt directly with the Shah. The dual control thus exercised from Calcutta and from London still reflected, though in a much attenuated shape, the open conflict which had raged at the beginning of the century at Teheran itself between two British Ministers, one of whom travelled up with letters of appointment from the Governor General of India and the other who had reached the Persian capital from Europe with credentials from King George III. To compare great things with small, I, too, found myself at once in a dilemma. For the Zill had heard of my mission and insisted on seeing my Nordenfelt gun, though it was to the Shah that I was charged

to present it. I could not prudently disobey the summons which he sent me with a profusion of Oriental compliments to attend upon him without delay. He received me almost in state, and when I tried to convey to him the delicacy of my own position in the matter, he brushed my scruples aside by informing me that he had made inquiries as to the arrival of the caravan that was bringing the gun and had made arrangements for me to give him a display of what it could do on the parade ground outside Isfahan on a day which he would in due course appoint. He was not the man to take any refusal. Rather short and thick-set with a strong and hard face and searching eyes under bushy eyebrows, in a semi-Europeanized uniform with a magnificent diamond aigrette in his cap of black astrakan fur, he looked by no means incapable of having himself ordered, as it was commonly reported, the judicial murder of two innocent and wealthy followers of the Bab in order to share their plunder with the zealots who had denounced them. Careful, perhaps, not to arouse the suspicions of his royal father who was already rather jealous of the larger and better equipped army which he maintained on his own account, he professed to be much more interested in the Nordenfelt gun as a weapon for sport rather than for war! He was reputed to be a mighty Nimrod, but, though not yet thirty-five years of age, he was growing rather stout and scant of breath and had lost his taste for pursuing the ibex and the wild sheep in their native mountains, preferring to have them driven down by armies of beaters into close proximity to his luxurious camp where he could slaughter them at his ease from his own tent. The quick-firing Nordenfelt would, he imagined, enable him to make record bags!

Meanwhile I had plenty of time to explore the sights of Isfahan itself, though of the splendid city which excited the wonder and admiration of European travellers in the days when Elizabeth reigned in England and Akbar at Delhi only enough had survived to mark the contrast between the Persia of the

sixteenth and of the nineteenth century. Whole quarters of the city were deserted and in ruins; of the bazaars, which were once the finest and most thriving marts of Western Asia, many were entirely abandoned, and but few more than partially tenanted. The *Chehar Bagh* still existed, but its avenues of giant plane trees had been grievously thinned; water no longer flowed down them through a succession of marble channels and ornamental basins. In spite of the neglect with which the Kajar dynasty seemed deliberately to treat every remainder of the greatness of their Sefavi predecessors, the superb mosque erected by Shah Abbas on the Meidan still remained unique, but not unscathed, in the glory of its green-and-blue tiles, but in the ancient palace of the Sefavi princes, where the Zill-es-Sultan resided as Prince-Governor, some clumsy attempts at restoration had done more to mar the artistic beauty of the building than the ravages of deliberate vandalism. The entire population of the city, with the villages of the surrounding plains, was not reckoned at more than a quarter of a million, whereas two and a half centuries ago the estimates for the city alone varied between 600,000 and 1,100,000, and within ten leagues of its walls Chardin counted 1,500 villages. The days are indeed past when it was the proud boast of its people that Isfahan was half the world – *Isfahan nusf-el-jehan.*

The appointed day arrived, and before the astonished eyes of the Prince Governor and his obsequious court I brought the gun to bear successfully on a mud wall at a few hundred yards' range and raked it up and down until it collapsed in a cloud of dust. The Zill was delighted, and amongst other tokens of his favour, sent me in the evening as a special Persian delicacy a tiny cucumber, one of the first of the season, resting in an earthenware dish on a bed of rose leaves. I was told no such compliment had ever been paid to a foreign visitor unless of high official rank. It was the most expensive cucumber I have ever eaten, for the

princely orderly who brought it to me expected a present in return for his good offices, and delicately intimated that five tomans (£3) was the smallest 'insult' which his pride would condescend to accept. A handsome contract for a whole battery of Nordenfelt guns would, I was at the same time assured, follow as soon as I should have discharged my mission at Teheran and secured the Shah's exalted approval.

I ought by then to have already reached Teheran, but time seemed to be of so little account in Persia that I was not much disconcerted by advices from the capital, which reached me just as I was preparing to leave Isfahan, that the Shah did not intend to receive me until after the return of the Naib-es-Sultaneh, who was his son and Minister of War, from a tour of inspection on which he would be absent for some weeks. These were lucrative tours, and therefore apt to be protracted. So I started to visit Buzujird and the picturesque Lur country on the Western borders of Persia, but the state of chronic revolt in which the Lurs seemed habitually to live had become suddenly more acute than usual, and a messenger from the Zill who overtook me after my first four days' march warned me to desist, as he was sending a punitive force in that direction. Clearly he did not wish any foreigners to witness the sort of punishment that rebels had to expect at his hands. The Zill had not abandoned the usual Persian practice of giving discontent plenty of rope with which to hang itself and then sending a punitive force to crush it ruthlessly. At His Highness' gracious suggestion, I turned off into the mountains that overlook the upper waters of the Zenda Rud, the river of Isfahan, where I was to have leave to shoot his ibex and moufflon – or try to. Then I went on to Sultanabad, the centre of the carpet-making industry, where I had an entertaining illustration of the huge sham that called itself a Government. On the doors of the chief workshop in which the best craftsmen were employed on the merest pittance weaving carpets for the Shah himself, a Royal ordinance was nailed up conspicuously, forbidding

under the severest penalties the use of all aniline dyes which 'wicked people were trying to import from the land of the Infidels.' But inside scarcely a single carpet for the Shah's palaces was shown me for which aniline dyes had not been used. During the rest of my slow and rather wearisome journey to Teheran, I continued to meet with the same contrast between profession and observance in the slipshod methods of government, between the abject misery of the many and the unwholesome luxury of the few, between small oases of fertile vegetation and vast waste spaces of untenanted desert.

It was high summer before I reached Teheran, and I was thankful to accept the friendly hospitality of the French Minister, M. de Ballois, in his summer retreat at Tejrish, one of the villages within a few miles of the capital in which most of the European Legations seek refuge during the summer months from the heat and dust of Teheran. The Russian Legation was near by, and the British Legation not much farther off in another direction at Gulahek. Germany was not even represented, as Bismarck had no desire to launch out into a 'world-policy.' England and Russia were the only powers that counted, and British ascendancy in Teheran itself was for the time being scarcely challenged. For five and twenty years Great Britain had been represented by three Ministers in succession whose diplomatic experience had been chiefly confined to Persia, and for whom Teheran had become the Hub of the Universe, and the Shah the one potentate that mattered in their narrow world. Perhaps the altitude – nearly 4,000 feet above the sea – had something to do with it, but I have never seen pettier jealousies and more storms in a teacup than those that then raged between the different European Legations at Teheran, and sometimes within the walls of each Legation. There was just then no great and burning political question at issue. In Persia itself Anglo-Russian antagonism was for the moment quiescent. It was the year after Russian troops had occupied Merv, and Russia was busy consolidating the new position she

had just acquired on the road to Herat, and pushing her frontier forward along the borders of Afghanistan. Nasr-ed-Din Shah had twice visited Europe, and had imported a few Europeans who were supposed to be engaged on administrative reforms. Of these General Schindler, an Austrian by birth, alone did any lasting work, mainly in the fields of science and natural history, which lay outside his official functions, whilst the others merely excited general hilarity by the splendour of their uniforms and their adroitness in playing upon the weaknesses of their Persian employers. One of them who was organizing an international postal service was wont when warmed with wine to talk of the King of Kings familiarly as *Ma vache à lait*, and he was credited with having invented a practice afterwards widely adopted in the Central American Republics for adding to his official stipend, by making fresh issues of postage stamps almost at once withdrawn from circulation and then sold with great profit to European philatelists. The scandals of the Shah's own court and his immense *anderouns* – the Persian equivalent of the *hareem* – were only less disreputable than those of his sons' and other relatives who filled the highest offices of state. The most notorious was the Naib-es-Sultaneh, who was Minister of War, and was said to 'eat a hundred rations,' i.e. their equivalent in cash, for every ration that reached the tattered rabble which did duty for the Persian army.

Corruption was rampant everywhere, as I soon discovered to my own cost. For though my Nordenfelt gun arrived in due course safely and I at first received affable messages from the Shah promising to fix a day for its presentation, I never had occasion to unpack it, but ultimately sent it off on its long homeward journey again *via* Bushire, as I found that the road for it to the Palace would have had to be paved with gold tomans to satisfy the greed of a whole chain of officials great and small, with no prospect of any serious business at the end of it. The British Minister was far too Olympian to

concern himself with my affairs, and the French Minister could obviously not give me any official assistance.

As France had few political interests in Persia, M. de Ballois was a detached and somewhat cynical observer of Persian ways, and soon after my arrival, he had warned me that '*dans ce pays-ci il n'y à rien à faire pour les honnêtes gens.*' Nordenfelt with his unfailing good humour was even more amused than disgusted, and rather enjoyed cabling me to come home and *send the Shah to Jericho.* The Zill would have liked to detain the gun at Isfahan on its way back to Bushire, but was afraid of giving offence to his father who, I was told, flew into a passion when he ultimately learnt that I had left – but it was too late.

I returned home by the Caspian, hoping to visit on my way the section of the Trans-Caspian railway which the Russians were then building into Central Asia. Rather to my surprise the Russian Legation whom I had approached on the subject had not only assured me that no obstacles would be put in my way, but had even obtained letters of recommendation for me from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg to the Governor of Khrasnovodsk, near to the Caspian terminus of the line. But I was to discover when I arrived there how little influence the Russian Foreign Office was allowed in Central Asian matters. The Trans-Caspian Province was subordinate to the Governor-General of the Caucasus, a military Grand Duke who had not the slightest intention of allowing an English traveller to pry into the strategic railway which was then being pushed forward at high pressure. No sooner had the Russian steamer which carried me from the shallow roadstead of Meshed-i-Ser on the Persian shore of the Caspian, cast anchor at Khrasnovodsk than a smart young A.D.C. of the Governor came on board with His Excellency's compliments to escort me to Government House, a comically pretentious building standing at the end of a little avenue of tin palm trees which had to do duty for real ones on an arid foreshore where not a blade of grass

could grow, and the only fresh water obtainable had to be distilled from the sea. His Excellency received me with the utmost courtesy, but regretted to have to inform me that by superior order I could not be allowed to travel on the Trans-Caspian railway, nor even to visit the terminus at Petro Pavlosk. His instructions were categorical, and it was his duty to see that I proceeded straight across to Baku on the other side of the Caspian by the same steamer on which I had arrived. But as she would not be leaving until the following day he would be delighted for me to remain as his guest until it was time for me to embark again. A room had been made ready for me, to which I was at once conducted, and for the next thirty-six hours I was most politely entertained, but practically a State prisoner and under various excuses prevented from putting my nose outside the house until the same A.D.C. escorted me back to my ship an hour before she sailed. My host, who was himself, of course, a general, explained to me as the evening advanced and an abundant consumption of vodka loosened his tongue, that only the consciousness of the tremendous responsibility vested in him as Warden of the Central Asian Marches for his august master, the Tsar, made it possible for him to endure so *morne* a place of residence, after having enjoyed for many years the amenities of court life in the capital. I learned, it is true, from the captain of my steamer that the pickings of the office were more than commensurate with its responsibilities. But in any case I had seen enough to convince me that a far-reaching policy of Central Asian expansion which would sooner or later spell Russian domination at Teheran could alone account for the secrecy with which Russia was pushing on in so desolate a region the construction of a great railway along the whole Russo-Persian borderland east of the Caspian.

CHAPTER XI

PERSIA REVISITED IN 1902

On my return to England I summed up my impressions of Persia in 1884 in an article which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* under the title 'Persia *in extremis*.' But I had underrated the tenacity with which life persists in lower organisms, and when I travelled once more through Persia nearly twenty years later on my way to India to describe for *The Times* the great Delhi Durbar of 1903, the dissolution of a State more visibly decrepit than in 1884 was still overdue. The old Shah Nasr-ed-Din had been assassinated in 1896 by Persian fanatics, and his son and successor, Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah had already dissipated, chiefly on his own pleasures and on two very costly visits to Europe, the large treasure, including gold ingots bearing Fath Ali Shah's cipher, which his father had accumulated during a reign of nearly fifty years. The court was more grossly licentious and corrupt, the Government both more arbitrary and more feeble, the state of the whole country more chaotic. But most striking of all was the change that had taken place in the relative position of Russia and England at Teheran. British ascendancy had been completely superseded by Russian ascendancy. Russia held the Persian court at its mercy by the two-fold power of the sword and the purse. Not only was she now strongly entrenched along the Trans-Caspian railway running parallel and close to the Northern frontier of Persia, but she directly controlled at Teheran the only armed force in Persia that was of the slightest military value. Its name betrayed its origin. The men were called Persian 'Cossacks,' and were well armed, well paid and well trained under Russian officers, and their Commander-in-Chief was an extremely able Russian, General Kosagowsky, who was himself under the orders not of any Persian authority, but of the Russian Minister of War in St. Petersburg. The power of

the purse was not less effectively wielded through a Russian bank at Teheran controlled by the Russian Ministry of Finance, which fed the Shah and the bankrupt Persian State with loans out of money conveniently raised at lower rates of interest in Paris, whilst a new Russo-Persian commercial agreement enabled Russia to keep a strangle hold on Persian trade. Even the undeniable ability and resourcefulness of the British Minister, Sir Arthur Hardinge, could not arrest in such circumstances the headlong decline of British influence, though a futile and rather humiliating attempt was made to disguise it in the following year by conferring such an exceptional and undeserved honour as the Garter on Muzaffer-ed-Din, who was actually little more than a pensioner of Russia. The Shah was himself on his way back from Europe when I landed at Enzeli, and the whole of his court, numbering thousands of retainers, was hurrying down to the Caspian to welcome him according to immemorial custom. For hours together along the road to the capital, which had been built since my last visit with Russian money and by Russian engineers, there streamed an endless procession of litters, carriages and carts, and of camels, mules and horses, laden with the *personnel* and the paraphernalia of an uncouth Oriental court still mediævally barbaric under a superficial travesty of European fashions. Detachments of Persian infantry slouched along at intervals in every variety of patched and tattered uniform – once upon a time sky blue – some with two shoes of different patterns; many with only one, and most of them with none; the majority old men or boys, with a sprinkling of every other age, from extreme youth to extreme senility. Their rifles, varying equally in pattern and condition, they had stuck promiscuously on the pack of any unobjecting mule. Those who had fallen out hopelessly on the way or had a few coppers to spare – or were they perhaps the officers? – reclined at their ease on the top of cumbrous baggage carts. A military band travelled in still more original fashion, each of the larger instruments,

big drums, trombones, etc., crowning in solitary grandeur the load of a slow-moving pack-camel. Only one thing stood for reality: that was the escort of Persian 'Cossacks' under their Russian officers, all thoroughly equipped and smart and trim.

From Teheran I travelled down to Isfahan in a lumbering carriage with three horses harnessed abreast, more quickly but in many ways less agreeably than when I had ridden the whole way on horseback. But there was no alternative, for with the construction of what the Persians were pleased to call roads, the old relatively efficient posting service with frequent relays of horses had gone to rack and ruin, like all other institutions dependent on State control. Isfahan showed similar signs of increased decay. The Zill-es-Sultan was still the Prince-Governor, but in visibly reduced circumstances. Even before his brother succeeded to the throne, the old Shah, Nasr-ed-Din, had curtailed the Zill's powers and withdrawn from him one by one the Governorship of all the provinces of Middle and Southern Persia, save that of Isfahan itself. Even the army, which he had created, had been disbanded or had melted away. When he received me he did not appear to have lost much of his old astuteness and vigour of mind or his ready wit, and he himself was the first to allude to the changed conditions in Persia, which he professed to have accepted in an Oriental spirit of resignation to the decrees of fate. He complained, nevertheless, bitterly of the shortsightedness of British policy, which had acquiesced in the sacrifice of the best friend the English had in Persia – himself of course. In Isfahan as well as in Teheran the British representative had recently been furnished with an escort of Indian cavalry, as a set-off, presumably, to the loss of more substantial attributes of British power, and as the Zill had paid me the compliment of sending one of his carriages to fetch me at the British Consulate-General where I was staying, the latter had returned the compliment by sending a squad of Indian Sowaris with me to the palace. The Zill

pointed to them as I was leaving, and remarked with something of his old humour that their uniforms were doubtless much more picturesque than those of the Persian Cossacks – of whom there was also now a detachment at the Russian Consulate-General – but why did we not send more of them? 'I am told,' he added, 'that the Persian Cossacks in the North are not meant only for ornament, but for business!'

With the growth of Russian competition in Northern Persia endeavours had been made to create greater facilities for British trade with Central Persia from the Gulf, and a road, of which the greater part was nothing more than a track for pack animals, but an easier one than that from Bushir over the *Kohtals* to Shiraz, had been recently opened through the Bakhtiari Mountains to the Karun River which British steamers navigated down to the Tigris. I decided to take what was called the Lynch Road after the founders of the well-known shipping company that still held from the Turkish Government a concession for the navigation of the Tigris. The road crossed a wild tract of mountainous country controlled by the no less wild Bakhtiari chiefs, who had, however, long been under obligations to us for protection against the exorbitant exactions of their Persian overlord, and had now been freely subsidized to assist in the construction of the new road and its safe maintenance within their boundaries. Nothing could be more cordial than the hospitality which they extended to me, though it was usually pleasanter to sleep in the tents we carried with us, which we could pitch just when and where we and our ponies grew weary of the long day's march. The scenery, as in most parts of Persia, had its moments of grandeur, as when we reached the top of a particularly steep and exhausting pass, characteristically called by the Persians 'The Pass of the Pulling up and Letting down of Skirts,' the Persian highlander being accustomed to pull up his skirts and tie them round his hips for a particularly steep ascent, letting them down again when he goes down hill. It was brilliant autumn weather with a sharp nip in the

air and sometimes even hard frost at nights in the higher altitudes, and though the long summer had parched the scanty vegetation of the few upland valleys, range after range of bare hill glowed regularly twice a day into gold and purple at sunrise and sunset. To have laid out a tolerable caravan road, scaling four distinct chains of mountains and rising at one point to nearly 8,000 feet, was an achievement that had no parallel then in Persia, and still more unparalleled were the two steel suspension bridges, one of them thrown across the gorge down which the deep blue waters of the upper Karun rushed towards Mesopotamia. It was the right time of year, too, for seeing something of the Bakhtiaris themselves, whom Layard, when he first discovered them, proclaimed to be 'of pure Iranian blood, the descendants of the tribes which from the remotest antiquity inhabited the mountains they still occupy.' Muscular and active like all highlanders, their most attractive feature is their sparkling jet-black eyes. Constant exposure to sun and wind has tanned their skin almost as black as the raven ringlets that curl over their ears. They were then descending at the approach of winter into the rich pasture lands of Arabistan, and from time to time we would overtake a long stream of men and women and children with their flocks and droves winding slowly up and down the narrow mountain track, lambs and kids and babies and hens tied promiscuously, with the rest of the tribal goods and chattels, on the backs of the nimble little donkeys and diminutive cows which serve as beasts of burden. Many of the men, and a few of the women, rode horses or mules, but the majority went on foot. Grimy and sunburnt and often ragged, their proud bearing and elastic step stamped them as lords of the soil they trod, and the humblest goat-herd tending his flock down the mountain side wore a rifle or a musket jauntily slung across his back. Nominally Mohammedans, as they were nominally Persian subjects, their allegiance both to the Koran and to the Shah sat lightly upon them. 'No true Bakhtiari,' it used

to be said, 'dies in his bed,' and in defiance of all Moslem prejudice and usage, a rough-hewn lion of a conventionally uncouth type, adorned with a sabre and a pistol, marks in every ancient graveyard the resting-place of the warrior. As for temporal authority, the ordinary Bakhtiari, at any rate, looks no farther than the head of his tribe.

At times their independence has been well-nigh absolute; they have more than once threatened to overthrow the power of the Shah; on one occasion they actually placed a puppet of their own on the throne at Isfahan. But, in the long run, the treacherous diplomacy of the rulers of Persia has been too much for them. One of their chiefs said long ago to Layard: 'I will tell you the truth, Sahib. We Bakhtiaris are all fools. So long as we are powerful and strong, we do not fear the Persians. But we must needs be at enmity amongst ourselves and seek each others' lives. Were we but united, these mountains could never be trodden by those dogs of Turks' – the Kajar dynasty in Persia was of Turkestan origin – 'for they are women, not men.' One or two of the more important chiefs had, or had given their sons, Western education. At Kahvi-i-Rukh, his summer residence, on a well-watered plateau high up in the mountains, I was the guest of the Sirdar Isfendiar Khan, the head of the Haft Lang tribe and supreme chief or Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari tribes, a grave and rather sad-looking man of fifty-two, whose father was treacherously murdered by the Zill-es-Sultan under orders from Teheran. Isfendiar himself was spared, but for six years afterwards he remained a State prisoner. To his own people, reputed to number over 250,000 souls, and to be capable of placing 70,000 fighting men in the field, his word was law, and nothing perhaps afforded a better illustration of the implicit obedience he commanded than the acquiescences of the tribes in the prohibitions he had recently enacted of the use of tea and sugar, the excessive consumption of these Persian luxuries tending in his opinion towards Persian effeminacy. The Bakhtiaris were

still proud to remember that in the first years of the nineteenth century, when Napoleon talked of invading India with a Franco-Russian army, the Government of India raised a Bakhtiari force of 3,000 men under British officers. Primitive peoples have a long memory for their own history and they were alarmed at England's surrender to Russia of her former primacy in Teheran. Greater still was their contempt for the Shah who was selling his country to the Muscovite. 'But we will be even with him yet,' said one of the younger chiefs, and a few years later the Bakhtiaris played a more important part than the soft Persian townsmen in the Nationalist movement which, but for Russian ascendancy, would have hastened by more than ten years the downfall of the Kajar dynasty.

CHAPTER XII

TWO CRUISES IN THE PERSIAN GULF

As I got down to the Persian Gulf in 1902 I heard less of Russia and more of Germany as the Power whose growing influence threatened to displace our own. For the Baghdad Railway with its projected prolongation to the Persian Gulf, or B.B.B. (Berlin, Byzantium, Baghdad) as the Germans called it, was part of William II's scheme of using Turkey as 'a bridgehead to German world dominion,' and in the Gulf region the Turks were busy tuning up their hitherto mostly nominal authority in obedience to instructions which, if they issued from the Sublime Porte, bore the obvious impress of the German Embassy at Constantinople. At Mohammerah the Sheikh was already alarmed for the autonomy which he had so far successfully asserted, thanks largely to British support, against Turkish as well as Persian overlordship, and to hamper our trade on the Karun River, the Vali of Busra, on the plea of cholera, imposed a strict and very onerous quarantine against travellers crossing from Persia. Had I not taken my precautions beforehand, I should have been detained for some time. But my friend, Sir Nicholas O'Conor, was at that time Ambassador at Constantinople and he claimed to have a good deal of personal influence with the Sultan, though England, as an inconvenient advocate of reforms in Turkey, was not at all in favour. Before leaving Teheran I had written to him that I was going to put his personal influence to the test by asking him to procure for me from the Sultan a special firman exempting me from Turkish quarantine and authorizing me to cross without let or hindrance from Mohammerah to Busra. He rose to the occasion beyond, I confess, my most sanguine expectations, and when I got to Mohammerah I found a letter from the British Consul at Busra informing me that the Vali had received orders from Constantinople to send over a special

launch to take me and my party across from Mohammerah. I had only to name the day and hour, but I must be in readiness to embark at once, as the officer in charge of the launch had orders not to wait, and to hold no communication with the shore for any other purpose than that of taking me on board. I took care to be ready, but no sooner had the launch tied up to the small wooden landing-stage opposite to the British Consulate than the officer in charge and the whole of the ragged crew jumped on land and, begging me to wait a few minutes, rushed off to the native town where, in defiance of their orders, they stayed not for a few minutes but for a couple of hours. They came back at last quite unabashed and laden with purchases which they cheerfully assumed I should be quite willing to pass off as part of my own baggage, and when I remonstrated with them, they begged me not to say a word about it when we got to the other side, for what else could they do, when everything was so much cheaper in Mohammerah than in Busra, and they had not received their pay for months and months past? Was I not, moreover, an Englishman and, as they themselves were Arabs and the Arabs and the English had always been good friends, was I going to blacken their faces with their Turkish masters, whom they proceeded to denounce with a fine flow of expletives.

The Turkish officials were extremely civil to me, measuring, no doubt, my importance by the Sultan's firman, and I had not long to wait for a British India steamer to take me to Koweit, in itself a very insignificant little Arab town on a desolate strand, but suddenly invested with much importance as the potential Eastern terminus of the Baghdad Railway. For it was generally held to be the only roadstead near to the head of the Gulf which could possibly be converted into a harbour capable of sheltering large warships and ocean-going steamers. Turkey claimed sovereignty over it, but it knew no other master than Sheikh Ali Mubarak, and his authority was the only one acknowledged by a number of Arab tribes who were wont to roam from the Gulf far into the interior of

Arabia and owned no allegiance to the Ottoman Sultans. He told me he was over seventy, but he had a robust and manly presence and was reputed to possess both the courage and the cunning of his race. At a time when British prestige stood high in the Gulf he had willingly fortified himself against Turkish encroachments by accepting the guarantee of 'special protection' offered to him by the Government of India. I found him in the upper chamber of an Arab house raised high above its neighbours, whence he could watch the goings and comings of his seafaring people, skilled boat-builders and pearl-fishers, and he was loud in his protestations of confidence in the friendship and power of Great Britain, pointing with no slight show of pride to the portraits of the late Queen Victoria and of King Edward and his Consort that decorated his walls just above the seat of honour.

When I afterwards reached Delhi, Curzon expressed the most lively interest in my visit to Koweit, for he was bent on making it a naval base which should secure our position in the Gulf, whether against Germany or Russia. He told me that he hoped before long to visit the Gulf himself, and asked me whether I should not like to accompany him, adding breezily: 'You might then introduce me to your friend, Ali Mubarak.' I naturally accepted the invitation, though I scarcely imagined that it would mature so quickly, or indeed ever. But in the summer of 1903 Lord Lansdowne's Declaration with regard to British policy in the Gulf encouraged the Viceroy to carry out his projected tour, and in December, 1903, I joined him in Karachi on board the *Dufferin*, an Indian marine transport, which had been specially fitted out for the cruise.

I was already fairly familiar with the Gulf, for I had voyaged twice on its treacherous waters and inhospitable shores, and had seen something then of the influence we exercised along the whole coast, whether nominally under Arab or Turkish or Persian sovereignty. It was the British Navy that had alone cleared that great inland sea of pirates and had alone charted it and buoyed it and lighted its roadsteads. British steamers

alone navigated it. Anglo-Indian firms and Indian traders were the backbone of the small commercial centres at the few ports of call, and everywhere British residents appointed by the Government of India wielded greater power, except in purely local matters, than the titular native authorities. But a Viceregal cruise was a very different experience. We called first at Muscat, the picturesque old Portuguese stronghold on the Arabian coast of Oman, where the Sultan paid honour to the Viceroy as in all but name his overlord. At the mouth of the Gulf we explored two long and narrow fiords, as of a tropical Norway, which stretch for many miles between gaunt and sunscorched cliffs, lofty and desolate, into the Eastern corner of the Arabian peninsula. A State durbar was held on board the *Dufferin* for the Trucial Chiefs of the Arab coast who, poor fellows, had had a trying time rocked rather roughly in the cradle of the deep whilst waiting in a small despatch boat H.M.S. *Laurence*, for our arrival. Then across to Bunder Abbas, the first and worst Persian roadstead we touched at, where Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British Minister at Teheran, joined the *Dufferin*, and the Persian Governor of the Gulf had been sent to welcome the Viceroy on behalf of the Shah and entertain him at a great, or at least a very lengthy, banquet. At Koweit nearly two days were spent in the exchange of ceremonial visits and more intimate conferences with the old Sheikh, with whom Curzon professed to be delighted, and after we had explored the roadstead, there were naval consultations, which were also reported to have been quite satisfactory. All had so far gone well and according to plan. But on our arrival at Koweit the Viceroy had been perturbed by telegrams foreshadowing unpleasantness with the Persian authorities at Bushire, our next and farthest port of call. Before leaving Teheran Sir Arthur Hardinge had drawn up in agreement with the Persian Government a programme for the reception of the Viceroy, with which the latter was entirely satisfied, and it had been duly carried out at Bunder Abbas. But in the meantime Russian diplomacy had been busy working on the Shah's

susceptibilities, and an intimation had come from Teheran that Curzon's status as Viceroy could not be recognized on Persian territory. Sir Arthur, who believed that the whole difficulty must have arisen out of a misunderstanding which he would easily be able to remove, was sent on ahead in the *Laurence*, but when the *Dufferin* arrived the Persians were still obdurate. We lay for a whole day about five miles off Bushire whilst further negotiations were carried on, and Curzon's temper grew shorter. He would land only on his own terms, and those terms the Persians persisted in rejecting. So he did not land at all and the *Dufferin's* course was set for India again. Curzon was intensely mortified, all the more so as he perhaps felt that the rebuff was one to which he had needlessly exposed himself; for the projected visit to Bushire had been merely a supererogatory episode in a cruise, which had already fulfilled all the political purposes he had in view.

The next time I visited the Gulf was in 1911. It was again by invitation, but in very different circumstances. I was the guest of Admiral Sir Edmond Slade, then Naval Commander-in-Chief in the East Indies, on the *Highflyer*, and his squadron was conducting a long and troublesome campaign against a lawless traffic in arms by native dhows, that had recently assumed dangerous dimensions. Our influence in the Gulf had suffered considerably since the days when Curzon visited it, both from the growth of German ascendancy over the Ottoman Empire, and from the rising tide of Persian discontent, which had inflamed popular hatred against us almost as much as against Russia since the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. In Northern Persia Russia knew how to stiffen the authority of a puppet Shah, but in Southern and South-Eastern Persia, where we had acquired a precarious sphere of influence, lawlessness had developed into chaos on land and piracy at sea. Pathans and Afghans had taken lately to swarming down in large numbers into Persian Baluchistan, where they roamed about during the winter, overawing the wretched inhabitants by their truculence or bribing the petty local chiefs into sub-

servience, whilst they waited for consignments of rifles from Europe, for which Arab and European adventurers acted as middlemen, and native craft, often detached from the pearl fisheries, as transport. With their cargo of modern rifles and ammunition, they then returned to the highlands of our North-Western frontier, where they marketed them at great profit amongst the tribes for use in border warfare against our troops. The magnitude of the arms trade, and the increasing boldness of the gun-runners, was such that, since 1905, 200,000 rifles and many millions of ammunition were believed to have thus reached the Indian borderland. A comprehensive scheme of operations submitted by Admiral Slade had been approved by the Government of India, and besides the five cruisers and smaller ships of the East India Squadron, with their pinnaces and cutters, a number of steam launches armed, officered, and manned by the Royal Navy, were employed in scouring the open waters and searching the innumerable small creeks and coves available for native craft. Wireless telegraphy, then a relatively new discovery, enabled the Admiral to keep in constant touch with larger units of the Squadron at the different stations, and to spread a network of minor craft over hundreds of square miles of sea. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to observe the admirable efficiency and cheerfulness of blue-jackets and officers in the discharge of entirely novel duties, often under conditions of great material hardship. From the flagship as well from the other larger units a cutter would be despatched with a small crew provided with the simplest rations of food and water, for an independent cruise, sometimes of several weeks' duration, in all sorts of weather, exposed, with little or no shelter by day or by night, to the fierce sub-tropical sun or the cold blast of the sudden squalls from the North. When the men returned to their ship tanned almost black by sun and wind and sea salt, they not only looked fitter and cheerier than when they started, but were eager to volunteer again whenever they got a fresh chance, whether good or bad luck had attended them. In one case ninety-seven dhows

were searched before a single important capture was effected, as the Arabs grew more and more leery and quick to throw illicit cargo overboard as soon as they saw themselves hard pressed. Cases of armed resistance on the high seas were few and far between, but landing parties were always liable to sudden and violent attacks.

The Shah's sovereignty over the Persian coast of the Gulf was a ludicrous fiction. The whole of that part of his dominions, including Persian Baluchistan and Mekran on our Indian frontier, was a No-Man's Land at the mercy of any adventurer. The most remarkable specimen on to whose tracks we came was one Barkat, the chief of Biyaban, who had just been chastened by a small Indian force sent up from Bombay to drive him and his Afghan allies away from the coast, as a preliminary to larger naval operations. He had something of the diplomatic ingenuity as well as the truculence of an old-world Italian condottiere, for having amassed considerable wealth in his gun-running ventures he had invested a portion of it in judicious matrimonial alliances, taking into his *anderoun* the daughter of a Baluch chief who was the titular representative of the majesty of Persia in that district, and again the daughter of one of his principal rivals, with whom he then combined forces, and more recently the daughter of a Customs official at Jask, which was a valuable gun-running centre, and last of all the daughter of one of the most powerful Bashkardi chiefs engaged in the same business. Some of his other achievements were of a less defensible character, such as burning a captured rival alive, tearing jewellery with his own hands out of women's ears and noses if they happened to belong to a family which had incurred his displeasure, the wholesale plundering of harmless villages and inoffensive caravans which tempted his cupidity. The terror he inspired throughout the neighbouring districts was so great that Teheran itself was frightened, and, resorting to its usual methods of make-believe, solemnly invested him with the dignity of Governor. Only a force of bluejackets landed from H.M.S. *Fox* had saved the important

town of Lingah farther up the Gulf from being looted by another adventurer of the same type. When the danger was over the Darya Beghi, or Persian Admiral of the Gulf, arrived on the scene, and having wrung a fine of 12,000 tomans from the unoffending and peaceful population, made a lucrative deal with the marauding chieftain, and it was only partially spoiled for him by the unwelcome appearance of H.M.S. *Odin*, who captured several boats laden with plunder and burnt them after releasing some wretched prisoners who were being carried away for further ransom.

When we reached Bushire, the chief Persian seat of government on the Gulf had not yet entirely recovered from the effects of one of the most instructive and at the same time most humorous episodes of a reign of anarchy masquerading under the name of Nationalism. One fine day an important Tanghistani chief had appeared with some 300 ragged gunmen and produced a mandate from the High Priest of the great Shiah cities of Kerbela and Nejef in Mesopotamia, authorizing him to seize the revenue, and more especially the Customs revenue, in order that not a penny of it should reach the Shah's coffers until he yielded to all the demands of Persian Nationalism. Overawed by this impressive document, and perhaps still more by the gunmen's violence, this town of 25,000 inhabitants acclaimed the Seyyid as a liberator and allowed him to instal himself in the Governor's residence, where all the officials promptly did honour to him. The Shah vainly sought to placate him in the usual way by offering to recognize him as Governor with a high-sounding title. He showed his contempt for the Teheran Government by placing the real Governor under arrest as soon as he returned a few days later, all unsuspecting, from another part of the Gulf. He had a much more paying game to play. Having ousted the Director of Customs, who was a Belgian in Persian employ, he collected the Customs revenue with such energy that in a few days he announced that the National cause had been enriched by 18,000 tomans. The Bushire Anjuman, or Nationalist Committee, voted him a

handsome salary, with an allowance of two krans a day to his gunmen, whose numbers were speedily reinforced by their fellow-tribesmen, eager for a share of the flesh-pots. But after a time, when the Customs revenue began to dry up and the 'Liberator's' armed rabble began to help themselves freely to whatever they wanted, often with an accompaniment of somewhat promiscuous shooting, the Bushire patriots realized that they had exchanged King Log for King Stork. And not only the more respectable citizens but also the Russian, German and Turkish Consuls, however reluctant to seek assistance from the British, turned to Colonel (afterwards Sir Percy) Cox, who was then the British Political Resident, for protection. With his unique experience of the country he was wise enough to let the Seyyid stew for some time longer in his own juice, and when, after a somewhat serious affray between rival tribesmen, a landing party from H.M.S. *Fox* appeared on the scene, there was not only no resistance, but it was the British bluejackets who were in turn welcomed as liberators. The Darya Beghi once more held up his head, and even went so far as to arrest the Seyyid, but then the usual bargaining took place and the Seyyid was quickly deported by sea back to Turkish territory without ever having been held to account for the funds he had appropriated in the name of the 'Persian nation.'

I spent altogether five very instructive as well as extremely pleasant weeks with Admiral Slade before the *Highflyer* brought us back to India, and I had added enough to my previous experience of Persia under the Kajars to prepare me for the wretched part which that unfortunate country played during the Great War. I had seen the lawless elements from which German emissaries – sometimes business men and even professors who had been busy for years reconnoitring and preparing the ground – were able to recruit and arm large mercenary bands, one of which raided as far down as Bampur in Persian Mekran, almost within sight of our Indian frontier. Only in a country in which grossest misrule had for generations sapped all the vital [redacted]es of the nation (the Russo-

Japanese War, fought out on Chinese territory in Manchuria, being perhaps the only analogous case in modern times) would it have been possible for Turkish and Russian and British forces to march their armies for several years up and down the Western provinces of Persia, whilst the rival diplomatists of the belligerent powers were engaged in an almost equally forcible struggle to retain their hold upon a distracted Shah who could not make up his mind which side would pay him best. The Great War has left its marks almost as deeply in Persia as in the countries that were actually parties to it. When Curzon was at the Foreign Office he made a last and abortive attempt to put the clock back to the old days of British ascendancy over Persia. But the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1920, which bore his impress, quickly died a natural death. A new Russian menace has appeared at Teheran in the shape of Bolshevism, but it may perhaps meet with more effective resistance than the old menace of Russian Tsarism now that the Kajar dynasty has been swept away, and a less turbulent Persian Nationalism has found perhaps more vigorous and orderly expression in the person of Riza Pehlewi, the new Shah of Persia. He, like Mustapha Kemal Pasha of Angora, whom he seems to have taken for his prototype, is a soldier by temperament and by profession, and he would apparently have preferred to wield a similar military dictatorship as President of a Persian Republic. But whatever the modern political conceptions from which Persian Nationalism has derived its inspiration, the old influence of the Shiah priesthood, which differentiates Persia from other Mohammedan countries, was sufficient to prevent the adoption of a republican formula, and for the present at least the new Shah bears the ancient title of King of Kings.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD CHINA

NOTHING that happens in China ever really surprises me when I recall my first vision of Peking. It was thirty-two years ago, but it still haunts me like a fantastic nightmare. The Chinese capital was then still wrapped in its ancient veil of mystery, and its long line of grey battlemented walls – the most imposing of China's many 'look see' shams – had taken on a bronzen glow from the orange flames of sunset. No railway had breached them yet, and their rare gates were inexorably closed against the traveller as soon as the sun went down. That was the one ordinance of which no *kumshaw*, it was said, however bountiful, could secure a relaxation. I had come up from Tientsin by the shallow and tortuous Peiho River, on a Chinese house-boat as far as Tungching, the nearest 'port' to the capital, and contrary winds had lengthened the voyage into the afternoon of the third day. But when I landed there I found one of the *Tingchais* of the Legation waiting for me with a sturdy Chinese pony to carry me over the remaining twelve miles along a broken track, once splendidly paved and still by excess of courtesy styled 'the Imperial Road.' It was my birthday, May 23, 1895, and my old friend Sir Nicolas O'Conor, who was then Minister to China, had pressed me to reach Peking in time to eat my birthday dinner under his roof. As he had warned me above all things not to get shut out at the city gates, there was no time to be lost, for the sun was already low, and I seldom rode harder or got more smothered in dust and soaked with perspiration than during the last few miles across a hot waste of sand, with Peking in sight but never, it seemed, any nearer. The last gallop, however, brought me to the Northern Gate, and O'Conor, who had been expecting me much earlier in the day and had finally had the happy thought of riding out to meet me, was standing with two of his other *Tingchais* in the

gateway itself expostulating with the Manchu guards, who protested that it would be 'death by the thousand slices' for them to let it remain open a moment longer, as the sun had actually just set. He had, however, seen me, or rather a thick cloud of dust which, he was sure, meant me, moving across the empty plain, and refused to budge until I was safely inside.

There was another long hour's ride before me, first through the straggling Chinese city, interspersed sometimes with open fields and gardens, more often with desolate graveyards or vacant spaces given over to garbage and worse ordures; now and again through narrow crowded streets teeming with life; then through more deep archways and great gates under the intersecting walls that separated the Chinese from the Tartar city, into larger and more important thoroughfares, past the pink walls of the Forbidden City, and at last into a street with some semi-European shops and buildings and across a bridge over a stagnant canal into the peaceful compound in which the British Legation, once the Palace of an Iron-capped Manchu Prince, was ensconced amongst green trees and sweet-smelling English rose-bushes. During the greater part of that long ride all my senses seemed to be assailed at the same time – my nose by the most pungent and unsavoury smells, my ears by the discordant din of a strange and uncouth tongue, my eyes by weird and often revolting sights. At every vantage-point groups of professional beggars, maimed or blind or with loathsome sores ostentatiously displayed, rushed forward clamouring for alms and fought for the 'cash' or small copper coins flung to them as we passed along by the Minister's *Tingchais*; for, as he explained to me, beggars were not to be lightly treated who were all members of a powerful guild of which an Imperial Prince was the recognized and well-paid head. Other miserable creatures, presumed to be criminals and labelled accordingly, shambled along with the jangle of chains on wrists and ankles, and their heads protruding through a hole in the *kang* or heavy square wooden board

which pressed down on their shoulders. Sometimes one was jostled by files of slow-paced, long-haired camels bearing cumbersome loads from Mongolia or Manchuria, or one was caught in a file of nimble, sure-footed donkeys from the neighbouring villages. There were large omnibus wheelbarrows on which the humbler folk perched sideways on a dividing knife-edge. Such as could afford the higher fare were packed into heavy-hooded carts slung upon clumsy wooden wheels which drove deep furrows into the unpaved streets. Big brawny coolies, stripped to the waist, with their pigtails wound round their heads, sturdily elbowed their way home through the gaping crowds which surrounded the busy pedlars auctioning goods of every description, or the vendors of sticky sweetmeats and rotten fish. Women and girls, Manchus with large healthy feet and Chinese with their poor little 'lily-feet' artificially cramped from earliest childhood, strutted and limped and tittered, the enamel of last week's paint and powder on their faces streaked with dirt and sweat, and imitation flowers stuck into an elaborate structure of hair. Slant-eyed children, big and little and of both sexes, swarmed in and out and almost under one's horse's feet – the boys sometimes dressed as girls in order to deceive the jealous deities whose wrath disdains to wreak itself on the soulless sex. In the Tartar city, with its often more spacious streets, but all equally full of pitfalls at night, almost as unlighted and frequently quite as malodorous as the more plebeian quarters, one brushed by the fashionable world of Peking. Sedan chairs borne high on the shoulders of four or six or eight swift runners conveyed be-spectacled Mandarins on their way back from their official *yamens*, smooth-faced, bloated eunuchs on errands from the Palace, foreign diplomats careful to assert one of the few privileges publicly accorded to their status. Smart young Manchu bloods disported their finery on ambling mules or prancing horses no less gaily caparisoned, and in larger and more closely-hooded carts one caught glimpses of Manchu ladies of high degree whose rank was denoted to the

expert eye by the position of the axle and the wealth of shining copper studs on the wheels. Pleasure-seekers passed in and out of their favourite theatres and tea-houses, and shopping was not yet over in the principal streets, where wonderful shop fronts of carved wood, heavily gilded or brightly painted, and alluring signboards and flags invited the curiosity of well-to-do purchasers. Incidental to the stormy times through which China was passing at the close of her disastrous war with Japan were the forbidding groups of Chinese soldiers encamped in rows of tents or bivouacking in the open, whose numbers increased as we drew nearer to the Forbidden City and the Legation quarters – ugly-looking fellows, fearsomely armed with weapons ancient and modern. 'What do you think,' O'Conor asked me, 'of our guardian angels?' and he added with his richest Irish brogue: '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*'

Such was the Peking I first saw only a little more than thirty-two years ago, and what I could then see was the mere outshell of the innermost Peking, of the Holy of Holies which was still kept jealously closed against the Western intruder. In 1895 the Imperial Majesty of China, nominally a shadowy young Emperor, but in reality a masterful old Dowager Empress, sometimes called 'the old Buddha,' was hidden away from all profane eyes in yellow-tiled palaces amidst spacious gardens with shaded avenues and marble pavilions and large ornamental waters behind the pink walls of the Forbidden City, itself shut off from the Manchu and Chinese cities by another city, distinctively called Imperial, within whose high walls stood most of the great public departments of State. Only after many years' wrangling had the representatives of the foreign powers secured the right of audience within the Forbidden City, and only on rare occasions and in a minor pavilion set apart for the purpose. Admission was equally denied to the blue-tiled Temple of Heaven and all the other shrines at which it was customary for the Son of Heaven to worship at appointed seasons. Nor was one allowed on to the

top of the great outer walls of Peking, as useless in modern warfare as the sham guns mounted on their projecting towers, for they overlooked the whole of the capital, and the foreigner's peering field-glasses might have sacrilegiously defiled the yellow roofs of the Forbidden City.

Almost equally insurmountable were the social barriers between Chinese and Europeans in Peking. In the treaty ports of China there were large commercial communities drawn for trading purposes into close contact with the European settlements. Not so in the capital, where there was only the rarest and most formal intercourse between the official world and the few foreigners, mostly diplomats, who all resided in one small quarter of the Manchu city, and whose right to reside there since the Anglo-French expedition of 1860 none resented so deeply as the ruling Manchu caste. The British Legation was a haven of rest, but its very seclusion intensified one's sense of isolation. At night, when the gates between the Tartar and the Chinese city were closed, one was cut off even from the telegraph office and the single thread of direct communication it provided with the outside world. During the long winter months when the harbour of Tientsin is ice-bound, the only route open for mails and travellers to Europe was by a long and exhausting journey on horseback or in a Chinese cart down to the Yangtze and then by river to Shanghai. The Russian Trans-Siberian Railway had as yet no branch running down to Manchuria, and its only terminus on the Pacific was at Vladivostok, far away to the North, in Russian East Siberia. Except for a ceremonial visit on the Queen's birthday, Chinese officials of high rank hardly ever crossed the threshold of the Legation. Equally rare were the visits paid by the members of the Legation to the Chinese official world save for periodical visits by the Minister to the Tsung-li-Yâmen or Board of Foreign Affairs.

With that august body Sir Nicolas O'Conor kindly, and with much trouble, secured an audience for me, and lent me for my visit not only his official sedan chair and bearers, but

the services of his Oriental secretary, Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Jordan, who was to succeed him many years afterwards as Minister to China. Never before had the Tsung-li-Yâmen opened its doors to a foreigner who had no official credentials, and it was in every sense a unique experience for me. Through several courtyards crowded with shabby menials and past the painted walls designed to ward off evil spirits from the outer approaches to the Council chamber, I was introduced into the room reserved for diplomatic receptions. It was not a very large room and it was painfully ill-ventilated. At a long Chinese table sat on high Chinese chairs seven Mandarins of more or less high degree, whose rank in the bureaucracy was indicated by the devices embroidered on their silken robes of many colours, and still more definitely by the little button of jade or gold or coloured crystal on the top of their round silk caps from which depended their queues, artificially lengthened by plaited tresses of silk to match their hair. Of these dignitaries, through whom the Flowery Kingdom conducted its relations with foreign diplomacy, not one spoke any language but Chinese ; only one had ever travelled outside China, and only one other had ever served outside Peking or its home province. Their country was just then in the trough of a great storm. The Japanese army and navy had shattered the old tradition of China's immense latent power, particularly dear to British diplomacy. Even after Japan's first resounding victories O'Conor had written to me that in the end 'the Chinese anvil' was bound to wear out the Japanese hammer.' The hammer had not, however, been blunted and China had been fain at last to purchase peace at Shimonoseki from the 'little yellow dwarfs' she had always derided, on terms which the subsequent intervention in her favour of Russia, France and Germany rendered perhaps less humiliating, but certainly not less disastrous. But in the polite conversation which passed between their Excellencies and myself during a full hour's visit, not a single observation fell from them which showed the slightest grasp of the dangers that still encom-

passed China or even the slightest consciousness that China was not still the Hub of the Universe. Their whole attitude betrayed an undiminished ignorance of and contempt for the outer world of 'barbarians' beneath the perfect courtesy with which they treated their visitor. After the usual assurances of the importance China had always attached to England's friendship I was loftily assured that the reputation of *The Times* as a great newspaper had long since reached their ears and that they were glad to welcome me as its representative. I was in due course offered the usual Chinese pipe and a glass of tepid champagne of the dubious brand known in the bazaars as 'Mandarin champagne,' and finally the ceremonial cup of tea made its appearance, which marked the conclusion of the audience. To all the questions I tried to put to them, these 'grave and reverend seignors' adroitly eluded any definite answer by quoting in most cases some more or less irrelevant passage from the Chinese classics, and of their views, if they had any, as to the conduct of foreign affairs committed to their charge I had no more conception when I left the Tsung-li-Yâmen than when I entered it. What I had acquired was a valuable insight into their mentality, and I tried to imagine what sort of reports they made on bended knee to the Throne between the hours of 3 and 5 a.m. allotted by ancient custom for their admittance to the Imperial presence.

The only great Chinese house I visited was that of Yung-lu, the Governor of Peking, who was afterwards to play a somewhat dubious part in the Boxer troubles, and when he agreed, also through O'Conor's good offices, to receive me, he insisted on great secrecy. So it was arranged that I should only proceed in the Legation cart as far as an appointed spot at which I should find one of his own carts waiting to convey me to his home, and the same on the return journey, in order not to attract public attention. The visit, however, was well worth while, for it was a beautiful house, or rather a collection of beautiful pavilions connected by covered ways along interior courtyards, and across small formal gardens, delightfully cool

and restful and refreshing after a long jolt through the dust and smells of Peking streets. The room in which I was received had delicately-painted panels and fretted gilt woodwork, finer in quality than the reception rooms of the old Manchu palace which the British Legation had once been. The plea for my visit had been that I should see Yung-lu's splendid collection of Chinese art treasures, especially his jade, and nothing could exceed the courtesy with which he showed me round and pointed out the merits of his choicest pieces. Conversation was difficult, as the youthful member of his household who acted as interpreter was very handsome and handsomely arrayed, but had only a slight knowledge of English, and lost the little he had – perhaps he had instructions to do so – whenever I attempted any excursion into matters of public interest.

To give me a glimpse into the 'smart' life of Peking I was bidden by some diplomatists who professed to be connoisseurs of Chinese culinary art to dine with them at a fashionable restaurant just outside the Imperial city, known as the Lotus Pavilion because it overlooked a moat covered with lotuses just then in full bloom. I did not share my host's enthusiasm for the endless succession of courses set before us, but the *mise en scène* was picturesque. The restaurant, lighted by innumerable little Chinese lanterns, was divided into a long row of small rooms or pens separated by sliding panels, almost overhanging the moat, where there were more Chinese lanterns floating between the lotus leaves. Less agreeable was the Chinese music with which we were plentifully regaled; for each party of Chinese diners was attended by its own Chinese singing boys and musicians, and all would sometimes play and sing at the same time, whether by design or accident was not discernible to my unattuned ears. It was a hot night in the early summer, and the place was crowded. We were the only Europeans, and as our presence excited a good deal of curiosity, the Chinese guests passing to and fro would constantly mistake our door for theirs, and our immediate neighbours

on either side would occasionally push the panels just far enough ajar to have a peep at us – which also enabled us to have a peep at them. A particularly uproarious party next door to us was one over which Prince Tuan presided, a big, coarse-looking Manchu stripped to the waist – doubtless on account of the heat – of whom I should have taken much more careful note could I have foreseen the sinister part he was to take a few years later in the Boxer troubles. In 1895 it was still only from the sullen aloofness of the ruling class and occasional jeers from street urchins that one could guess at something of the resentment which the mere presence of foreigners aroused in the Chinese capital. Only the shop-keepers, and especially the curio-dealers, greeted one with a great show at least of cordiality. Besides long walks in the city and long rides outside its walls, I made a few expeditions further afield to the Western Hills and the Ming tombs and the Great Wall, where its sinuous length sprawls up and down the flanks of the desolate mountains that divide off China proper from Mongolia, and though I was never at all seriously molested, the feeling grew upon me everywhere that suppressed hatred and contempt lurked constantly in the yellow slant-eyed faces of a people for whom all white men were 'outer barbarians' and 'foreign devils.'

I stayed at Tientsin on my way back from Peking in order to see the great Li Hung-Chang, then the most powerful of the Empress's henchmen, Viceroy of the Home Province of Chih-li and Warden of the maritime approaches to the capital. The atmosphere of his Yamen at Tientsin differed little from that of the Peking Board of Foreign Affairs. He was obviously a man of much greater intellect and experience, and he had had a great deal more to do with foreigners from the days when 'Chinese' Gordon helped him to suppress the Taiping rebellion, and ended by threatening to shoot him for his bad faith. He had risen to power by the usual methods in China and by the special favour he enjoyed with the old Empress. He was shrewd enough to realize the need for some of the material

and mechanical appliances of Europe if China was to hold her own against the increasing impact of the West, and he had spent £50,000,000, of which a not ungenerous percentage had gone into his own pocket, on the creation of a Chinese fleet and a Chinese army expensively equipped with modern weapons, and the building of big fortresses for the protection of his sovereign lady's capital city and residence. But he could neither acquire nor impart to his people the qualities of discipline and organization and leadership, and above all, the integrity which he himself lacked, and all his costly make-believe had collapsed ignominiously at the first collision with Japan, who had not merely borrowed from the West with far greater intelligence, but had retained her own fine traditions of social service and chivalrous loyalty to the State. When he received me with much the same ceremonial as that to which the Tsung-li-Yâmen had initiated me of pipes and sweet champagne and the final cup of tea, but in a still stuffier room and on a very sultry morning in July, Li Hung-Chang, who had negotiated the Treaty of Shimonoseki, was far too well satisfied with his recent diplomatic achievements to be conscious of the price which China would have to pay for the respite which the not unselfish intervention of Russia, France and Germany had done far more than he had to procure for her. He was, at any rate, disinclined to discuss the future and preferred to dwell sorrowfully on the aloofness of England, who in the hour of trial had never raised a finger to help her old friend China. Thence he passed quickly on to the question of opium, which had been, at least nominally, the first bone of contention between England and China, half a century earlier. It was a subject on which he knew from experience how easy it was to gain the sympathy of European visitors prepared to accept his highly-coloured presentation of the case. He deplored with great eloquence the prevalence of opium-smoking amongst his own countrymen, which, he was afraid, had greatly demoralized the whole nation; but was it not, he urged with well-simulated pathos, the British attitude towards

the opium traffic that should bear the chief blame? But on this occasion his unctuous plea fell on unreceptive ears, for I happened to know that the opium poppy was nowhere cultivated on a larger scale or with more success than in the province of which Li Hung-Chang was a native, and on the very large estates he owned there. This I ventured to tell his Excellency, whilst assuring him, of course, that my gratification was all the greater at the admirable sentiments which he had just been good enough to express to me. The British Consul who had kindly accompanied me, as I had been advised not to rely on Li Hung-Chang's 'official interpreter,' assured me that my remarks had been quite accurately conveyed to his Excellency, but I hardly needed that assurance as Li Hung-Chang looked as black as thunder – and then, shrugging his shoulders, promptly turned the conversation with a loud laugh and even slapped me heartily on the shoulder.

His own secretary remained impassive and, perhaps, even relished my remarks, for he was none other than Lo Fung-luh, who only a few years later became a great favourite in London as Chinese Minister. One of the few Chinese educated at that time in the West, he had acquired an exceptionally wide knowledge of Western, and especially English, literature. He knew Shakespeare by heart and was no less familiar with Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill, and when he accompanied Li Hung-Chang to Europe in 1897 it was he who composed for his chief the series of edifying public speeches full of deep philosophy and enlightened and progressive sentiments with which the astute old Chinaman astonished and delighted his audiences in Western Europe, and in the United States on his way home. Few of his listeners would have then believed that his chief mission had been already fulfilled at St. Petersburg, where he was received by the Tsar and concluded a secret agreement with Russia for a consideration so substantial that the Dowager Empress, who had doubtless got word of it, kept him waiting outside Peking on his return to China until he had propitiated the Throne with a donation

of £800,000. Lo Fung-luh himself had a keen sense of humour. When he was Minister in London he had to convey to Lord Salisbury a proposal from the Chinese Government that Great Britain should undertake the re-organization of the Chinese navy. In declining it the British Prime Minister had descanted in the 'weary Titan' mood, which he sometimes affected, on the overwhelming burden of responsibilities which the British Empire had already taken on its shoulders, and Lo Fung-luh replied in the same earnest tone: 'Ah yes, my Lord, I fully understand, but may I be permitted to say what a calamity it is for mankind that the two greatest Empires of the world, the British and the Chinese, should apparently both be entering at the same time on their decline.' Lord Salisbury was amused and used to tell the story with great relish.

Sometimes Lo Fungl-uh's humour was more grim. He died in London in 1901 of a painful and almost incurable disease. I called on him during his last illness, and was told at first that he received no one, but I asked to have my card sent in to him, and was presently taken up to his bedroom. He was lying on a low couch, and with a curious whimsical smile on his drawn face, he invited me to take a seat and 'kindly wait a few moments until I have done with this gentleman.' He pointed to a wizened little Chinaman who was crouching beside him on the ground over a smoking brazier. For about five minutes the Chinese medicine-man continued to chant in a shrill nasal voice, whilst from time to time taking up a pinch of ashes from the brazier and sprinkling them over different parts of Lo Fung-luh's body with various passes and incantations. He thereupon kowtowed three times and retired. 'I thought, my dear friend,' Lo Fung-luh then said to me, 'it might interest you to see how a Chinaman steeped in your Western literature and saturated with your Western science and philosophy, dies – a Chinaman!' He then sank back on his couch, evidently in great pain. 'Thank you,' he said, 'for coming to see me, but I cannot talk any more.

Good-bye!' I never saw him again. He had, I believe, consulted many European specialists, but he had always shrunk from taking their advice.

None knew better than he did that the old China, too, was dying. When Li Hung-Chang once jeered at him for the little practical use to which he had so far turned his Western education, he is said to have replied to his master: 'Your Excellency is pleased to forget that I had to leave all that was best in my Western education outside the door of your Yâmen when I entered your service.' The old China, too, had turned its stubborn back upon all that was best in the Western civilization which she had been powerless to banish from her gates.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RISING SUN OF JAPAN

THAT the old Chinese Goliath had so soon collapsed before the young Japanese David took most of the world by surprise. Yet the reason why seemed to me to jump to the eye when, almost straight from Peking, I paid my first visit to Japan. Here was a country which, at the time I was born, was still leading a hermit life, rigorously closed for upward of two hundred years against any form of foreign intercourse under penalties so severe that for a Japanese to own any sea-going craft save for the purpose of fishing off his own coast, was a capital offence. The only exception to the absolute exclusion of all foreign vessels from Japanese harbours was the admission at stated intervals and under very humiliating conditions of a few Dutch merchantmen to a special anchorage in the Bay of Nagasaki for the supply of European luxuries required at the Japanese Court. Not till 1854 did the wall of self-imposed isolation which the great Emperor Iyeyasu had built up against the nations of the outside world at last collapse under pressure from an American fleet anchored in the Bay of Tokio, or Yeddo as it was still called. Unlike China, however, a generation of Japanese was already then growing up that had acquired some knowledge of the West through the study of European books, chiefly scientific, smuggled at no small risk into the country and laboriously translated, originally with little more help than could be got from the letterpress of the plates with which technical works on anatomy, botany, etc., were illustrated. An intellectual and already influential section of the nation greeted the enforced opening of Japan to foreign intercourse as a release from darkness. Another, no less powerful, dreaded the destruction of ancient beliefs and traditions kept so long and so carefully immune against the contagion of foreign ideas. The struggle between these two sections, leading at times to

civil war, lasted almost continuously till 1869, when the Mikado Mitsu Hito emerged from the dignified captivity in which a more forceful dynasty of Shoguns had kept the titular Emperors of a heaven-descended dynasty confined at Kyoto. That event is known in Japanese history as 'the Restoration,' and the new reign which it ushered in as 'the Era of Enlightenment.' At that date I was still only seventeen, and twenty-six years later, I was landing in Japan in 1895 to find an extraordinarily vital people and a strong and stable government that had already assimilated so much of Western knowledge and efficiency and organization as to justify its claim to take rank amongst the modern nations of the world. No other change that has taken place within my life-time is to my mind so wonderful and so momentous as the transformation of Japan within little more than two generations from Asiatic medievalism into a state outwardly modelled on Western civilization and largely imbued with its spirit, and yet able to preserve many of the best qualities of its own virile civilization.

Only a few days after my interview with Li Hung-Chang at Tientsin I was talking to the Japanese Prime Minister, Count (afterwards Prince) Ito, in Tokyo. He spoke my own language, slowly and by no means fluently, but correctly and with understanding, having been smuggled over to England when still quite a youth to acquire the Western knowledge which was still proscribed in his own country. In the course of our first conversation, as well as on every occasion on which I was subsequently privileged to meet him, he displayed a deep appreciation of Western and especially of English ideas and methods, combined with an independent and somewhat critical but always thoughtful judgment concerning the limits within which it was possible or desirable for his own country to adapt them to its material needs and ethical inheritance. On this occasion our conversation naturally turned mainly on the results of the recent war with China, and I was struck by the moderation with which he

discussed the intervention of the three Powers that had deprived Japan of some of the chief prizes of victory. He was convinced, and the event soon proved him to be right, that Russia had vetoed the annexation of Port Arthur and the Liaotang peninsula to Japan because she was determined to have them sooner or later herself, and he already faced the possibility of a decisive conflict with her one day, if ever her onward march across Asia to the Pacific became a direct menace to the national interests and perhaps even to the independence of Japan. French co-operation with Russia had, he felt sure, been prompted only by considerations of European policy, and by her anxiety to cement the recent Franco-Russian alliance wherever and whenever she could. Germany's association with France and Russia he ascribed to opposite reasons. The German Minister had in fact hinted to him that far from being actuated by any hostility to Japan, Germany's main object was to exercise a moderating influence with her Russian and French associates, and had in fact only joined in the ultimatum to Japan in order to restrain them, if need be, from more violent action. By a curious coincidence I had myself just received a letter from Berlin in which Baron Holstein, with whom I was at that time on very intimate terms, explained to me that Germany's action was chiefly intended to prevent the Franco-Russian alliance being demonstratively confirmed by joint salvos of artillery from French and Russian ships in the Far East, and after expressing with some acidity his disappointment that England had left her to perform this unpleasant task by herself, though it was in her interest as well as in Germany's, he concluded by reminding me of the old adage that two is company and three is none as the clue to German partnership with France and Russia in the Far East. I inferred, not unnaturally, that the instructions received by the German Minister in Tokyo had been couched in somewhat similar terms. Ito admitted that Japan had yielded only to *force majeure*, but that in making counsels of prudence prevail, unpalatable as

they had been to the military and naval authorities, and indeed to the pride of the whole Japanese people, he had derived great help from the moral support of England, who had steadily refused to join the coercion of Japan.

Another point may be worth recalling just now when the question of foreign settlements and extra-territorial rights and fiscal restraints has been raised in so acute a shape in China. Precisely similar conditions had been imposed by all the Western Powers on Japan under the treaties which originally regulated their relations with her. Japan began much sooner than China to resent these restrictions on her sovereign rights as unduly oppressive and humiliating. But she, more wisely than China, realized that the best way to secure their removal was by negotiation and not by violence, and above all by furnishing definite proof that she had herself made sufficient progress to afford foreign powers adequate guarantees for the safety of foreign life and property by improved methods of justice and efficient administration. The British Government had not only recognized that Japan could make a good case for treaty revision, but had agreed under Lord Rosebery's administration, just before the Chinese-Japanese War, to the Treaty, signed on July 16, 1894, which set an example to other Powers, and led the way to the complete emancipation of Japan from all those irksome restrictions. Such a proof of British goodwill had made a profound impression in Japan, and Ito himself attached scarcely less importance to it than to England's refusal to subscribe to the ultimatum launched against her by the three great Continental Powers of Europe. Without going so far as to contemplate the possibility of an actual alliance between the island Empire of the Far East and the island Empire of Great Britain, he expressed more than a mere hope that the relations between them would work out into a very close community of interests and policy.

Ito was only one, though perhaps the most conspicuous, of the remarkable group of Japanese statesmen of the Restora-

tion, who made modern Japan. Like all reformers, they provoked the bitter hatred of the remaining devotees of the old system, and Okubo, perhaps the greatest of all, was murdered by a reactionary fanatic in 1878. Differences of opinion occurred also amongst them, but whenever danger seemed to threaten the 'Era of Enlightenment' or the national interests of Japan, they closed up their ranks and presented an unbroken front. There were among them men who not only were firm believers in the principle of Japanese association with the West, but had the expert knowledge required to carry it into practice. What the Japanese generals and admirals had done to raise the equipment and discipline of the army and navy to the level of the fine fighting qualities belonging to a martial race, the war with China had just shown. Okuma and Matzugata showed themselves equally capable of placing the finances of the State on an equally sound basis. Itagaki played no less a part than Ito himself in laying the foundations of liberal political institutions and of a parliamentary system, cautiously adapted to Japan's gradual transition from the old feudalism to a modern democracy still in the making. Japan, too, has been the only Oriental country in which European experts called in to aid the various administrative departments were given the full confidence of those who employed them so long as their services were regarded as essential, and when the time had come to dispense with their assistance, never grudged them their reward.

Immense as was in this respect the contrast between the Elder Statesmen of Japan and the corrupt obscurantist Mandarins of China, it was scarcely less marked in other domains of national life. After Peking the streets of the Japanese capital seemed to be incredibly well kept, and almost equally incredible was its intricate network of telephone and telegraphic wires, and at night the great arc lights, which, however, barely dimmed the twinkling of the ubiquitous little Japanese lanterns. Great modern blocks of Government

buildings and, in the suburbs, large factories and tall chimneys afforded abundant if sometimes unsightly evidence of the growth of modern utilitarianism, but the mysterious shrines of Shiba and Asakusa, surrounded by parks and gardens thrown open to all comers, had not lost their hold upon the imagination of a poetic people, whilst in the best modern spirit of tolerance not a few Christians were already allowed to earn distinction in the public services. One of my earliest Japanese acquaintances was Count Aoki, a Christian, married to a German lady, and for many years Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs. Amongst the masses there were perhaps fewer converts to Christianity than in China, but everywhere there was evidence of the hold already taken on the Japanese people by a civilization which experience had so far led one to regard as almost incompatible with any other than Christian forms of belief. In the palaces and temples of Kyoto, the old capital, the delicate beauty of old Japan still survived in greater perfection than in Tokyo, the modern capital. But it was in Kyoto and not in Tokyo that was being held in 1895 a great industrial exhibition which displayed the whole range of Japanese industry. And so swiftly and steadily had it broadened out within half a century that in very few directions did it fall short of the whole range of the modern world's industry. If sometimes there was already a tendency, which has unfortunately increased a good deal since then, for cheaper and more vulgar production to meet Western demands and to gratify the ordinary Western tourists, predominantly American, there was no sign that the hand of the modern craftsman had lost its ancient cunning, and many of the textile fabrics and the finest specimens of gold lacquer and cloisonné enamels and ivory and metal work displayed even an advance in technical perfection. Oil and water-colour paintings of the Europeanized school did less credit to the imitative faculty in which the Japanese are supposed to excel, but it was abundantly illustrated in a more practical shape by thousands of articles, from European boots and

hats and cotton and silk manufactures to grand pianos and steam-boilers and delicate scientific instruments, of the very existence of which hardly a Japanese had dreamed a quarter of a century before.

If the Kyoto Exhibition was an astonishing demonstration of the determination of Japan to compete with the modern world of industry, it did not seem to imply any deterioration in the martial fibre of the race. The ancient spirit of Bushide was not confined to the Samurais who had played the chief part in the Restoration. It was still strong amongst all classes. A few miles out of Kyoto, in a picturesque and still very primitive village I witnessed the return of a small detachment of sturdy young peasants dismissed from the colours on demobilization after the war. The whole village was decorated with flags and patriotic inscriptions, and men, women and children in all their holiday finery had formed up in a procession to welcome them. At the head of the procession one small band of people was conspicuous for their bright attire and the offerings of flowers they carried in their hands. In front of them was borne a standard bearing the following inscription: 'To those who have returned gloriously from the victorious fields of battle the first and heartiest welcome is due from those who rejoice that their own folk who can never return have had the still greater glory of dying for the honour of Japan.'

CHAPTER XV

THE BOXER WRITING ON THE WALL

My next visit to China, in 1898, took me to Peking whilst the Powers were engaged there in a battle royal for 'leased territories' and spheres of influence and the privilege of issuing Chinese loans in return for railway concessions. Russia had 'leased' Port Arthur and the Liaotang peninsula, which the Japanese had been compelled to restore after the war of 1895 because, as Russia and France and Germany had then alleged, they would constitute in foreign hands a grave danger to the independence of China. Germany had 'leased' Kiaochau and asserted preferential rights in the whole province of Shantung in compensation for the murder of two German missionaries. The French had been awarded in the 'lease' of a small bit of Chinese territory adjacent to French Indo-China a more modest recompense for her share in the anti-Japanese demonstration of 1895, and Great Britain had 'leased' and occupied Wei-hai-wei as a counterpoise for the duration of the Russian occupation of Port Arthur. This great game of grab was not very edifying. But China as a whole was inert and seemed indifferent – Canton, for instance, had already declared during the war with Japan that it was no concern of hers and claimed the restitution of some Cantonese ships as 'neutral' 'vessels. The Peking Mandarins were feathering their nests. The Dowager Empress was busy stamping out the first sparks of a reform movement started in Shanghai and suppressing the young Emperor who had ventured to show some sympathy for it and to exert a will of his own. The foreign diplomatists regarded it as a storm in a teacup which concerned nobody outside the Forbidden City, and Sir Claude Macdonald, who was then British Minister, was the only one who, as a liberal-minded English gentleman, was disposed to take a benevolent

interest in the first stirrings of a progressive spirit amongst a still infinitesimal fraction of the Chinese people prompted by a few Western teachers.

On my way from Peking to Japan I paid a short visit to Korea, where the ancient but shadowy suzerainty of China had been brought to an end after the war between China and Japan, but only to make way for a prolonged struggle for ascendancy between Russia and Japan. Seoul struck me as being in many ways an inferior replica of Peking. The Korean Court had formerly aped, without ever being able completely to maintain, the lofty isolation in which the Forbidden City of the Manchu dynasty was still entrenched. MacLeavy Brown, with the large administrative experience he had acquired in the Foreign Customs service in China, had made some progress since 1895 towards the reorganization of the Korean finances, and other practical reforms had been elaborated under Japanese auspices. But an unreformed Korea was better suited to Russian purposes as well as to the Korean monarch's own tastes, and after having been at one time a prisoner in the hands of the Japanese and at another time a refugee in the Russian Legation, he had suddenly assumed the title of Emperor in 1897, whereupon political and administrative chaos prevailed once more throughout his Empire. The noble *yang-bans*, for the most part even more hopelessly effete and corrupt than the Mandarins of the Chinese capital, still strutted solemnly to their offices with the waddling gait prescribed by ancient etiquette, in their white robes of state so stiffly hooped that they reminded one of mid-Victorian crinolines. Jordan, whom I had met at the Peking Legation in 1895, had returned to Seoul soon afterwards as Consul-General, and with all his old liking for the Korean people, he had known them too long to have any illusions as to the fate of a country ground down under indigenous misrule and wedged in between two such powerful neighbours as Japan and Russia.

On my way home I ran up from Singapore to Bangkok –

one of the most unpleasant voyages I ever had, in a small shallow-draught steamer with a strong N.E. monsoon on our beam – which offered me another strange contrast after Peking and Seoul. For Siam still showed only very few signs of assimilation with the West, except at Court and in the highest official circles, where those – most of them Princes – who had been educated in England, had taken to evening-coats with white waistcoats and black silk breeches and stockings which, however smartly worn, seemed rather out of keeping both with their peculiar domestic customs and general surroundings. The main object of my brief excursion to Siam was not, however, to study the country or the people, but to find Dr. Morrison, who had already spent a year there as Correspondent of *The Times*, and to make arrangements for him to proceed at once in the same capacity to China, where he soon earned a world-wide reputation as 'Morrison of Peking.'

My third journey to the Far East followed closely on the suppression of the Boxer rising and the relief of the beleaguered Legations at Peking. I travelled out this time by way of Japan, and the conversation I then had with Count Ito about the significance of the Boxer revolt has often been vividly recalled to my mind by the events of the last few years in China. I began by congratulating him on the gallant part played by the Japanese, who, in conjunction with our own expeditionary force from India, had been the first to reach Peking some weeks before the arrival of the large German force sent out by William II with characteristic orders to deal with the Chinaman so that he should never again venture even to look askance at a German. It was to this that Ito alluded when he replied cheerfully, 'Well, yes, you and we got there well before our German friends, and our German generalissimo has arrived a long time after the feast. It is perhaps just as well.' But changing abruptly to a more serious tone, he said he was particularly glad to see me, as he was afraid that public opinion in the West, including England, was

inclined to misapprehend the significance of the Boxer rising. He was not speaking to me in his official capacity, but only as one who had had to study Chinese history. For many centuries, the history of the most ancient State in Asia – more ancient even than Japan – showed the rise and decline and fall of many successive dynasties, and when they were ripe to fall they were brought down by internal rebellion, or, if sometimes as the result of foreign invasions, by other Asiatic races that soon assimilated the old civilization of the country they conquered. There had been civil wars and foreign wars, but never any permanent disruption of China's ancient polity. But to pass to our own times, he was, he went on to say, convinced that the Manchu dynasty in China had been rotten for the last hundred years and was already ripe to fall when the Tai-ping rebellion took place in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was just one of those spontaneous commotions by which China had from time immemorial been accustomed to purge the body politic when mortally diseased. Had it been allowed to work itself out unhindered, it would probably have produced a strong man capable not only of performing a salutary operation but of founding a dynasty to take the place of the Manchus. But with the British instinct of conservation, misdirected in this instance through ignorance of Chinese traditions, England after some hesitation had set her face against the Tai-pings and, thanks mainly to Chinese Gordon's personal qualities and leadership, the Manchus were able to boast another triumph for their 'ever-victorious army.' They had, however, been incapable of turning that respite to any useful purpose. Peking had continued to squeeze the provinces and shown itself utterly powerless to preserve either the independence or the integrity of the Chinese Empire, which seemed almost to court spoliation at the hands of every foreign power. Threatened with another rising, of which the shrewd old Empress had instinctively discerned the danger for her dynasty, she had been quick to deflect it into anti-foreign channels, and the

Powers had been constrained to undertake large military operations in order to crush it; but for whose ultimate benefit? The Powers could not themselves set up another dynasty in Peking. They would probably be driven to bolster up the Dowager Empress as there was no one with sufficient authority to take her place, and she would know how to discharge on them the odium of having suppressed a popular movement with which she had been careful never to disown sympathy until she had had to yield to superior force. The waning prestige of the dynasty would nevertheless have suffered another and perhaps a mortal blow, and though as long as the masterful old lady lived she might weather the storm, she could not live for ever, and the day would come when China would reap the whirlwind she had sown, and not China alone, but the foreign powers who would have to pay for this further reprieve of a worthless dynasty. These were, Ito told me, the forebodings which haunted him at times when people congratulated him on the share taken by Japan in the 'pacification of Northern China.' 'But that is not, of course, practical politics,' he added, 'and it is practical politics you doubtless have come to discuss.' Japan, as he explained, speaking now as her Prime Minister and not as a mere dreamer of history, meant to take her place in the comity of civilized nations, and was bound to play her part worthily side by side with them in quelling an outbreak of Chinese savagery which threatened equally her own immediate interests. And he was particularly glad that it had fallen primarily to the British and the Japanese forces to relieve the Peking Legations, for that was surely of good omen for the closer relations between the two powers, of which he proceeded to impress upon me the necessity in the face of Russia's ambitions, every day more and more clearly manifested even at a time when common decency might have dictated a less naked display of greed than she was exhibiting in Manchuria.

I was deeply interested in Ito's prophetic survey of Chinese history, but I saw little to justify his gloomy forecast when,

before proceeding to Peking, I travelled up the Yangtze valley mainly for the purpose of meeting the two Viceroys of Nanking on the Lower, and Wu-chang on the Middle Yangtze, who had kept Central China entirely free from Boxerism. Neither would for a moment admit that it had been in any way a national movement and, whilst they spoke with proper reverence of the Throne, they expressed profound regret that in its sovereign wisdom it should ever have thought it necessary to yield to the pressure of misguided patriotism, and they were confident that the friendly, though unfortunately forcible, intervention of the Powers would enure to the peace and welfare of the Chinese Empire. The Viceroy of Wu-chang, the veteran Chang Chih-Tung, was a remarkable type of Chinese classical culture combined in an exceptional degree with official rectitude and real patriotism, and he was willing to travel somewhat beyond the ordinary platitudes within which his colleague at Nanking preferred to confine himself. Though his knowledge of Chinese literature was admittedly almost unrivalled, he was aware that the learning required at a time when China was being drawn willy-nilly into contact with the outside world could not be restricted to that in which he had himself been nurtured, and a book which he shortly afterwards wrote under the comprehensive title of *Learning* became ultimately a textbook in the hands of the more moderate school of Chinese reformers. He acknowledged quite frankly the blunders committed for many years past in the domain both of foreign and domestic policy by a ruling class that knew little or nothing of China outside Peking and the Forbidden City. For the Boxer movement he had no pity, and he would, he said, have been unworthy of the great charge committed to him by the Throne had he failed to keep it out of the provinces entrusted to his administration. Throughout that period he was constantly in touch with the British Consul-General in Hankow on the opposite bank of the Yangtze, which was then already growing into a great commercial and industrial centre for the

whole of Middle China. No Englishman would have been more horrified than Chang Chih-Tung himself could he have then foreseen that the British Concession would one day be stormed by a Chinese mob and a Red flag hoisted there triumphantly to take the place of the Union Jack.

From Hankow I continued up the Yangtze in a steamer to Ichang, and thence in a Chinese junk some way up the formidable gorges which no steamer had then ever attempted to navigate. I know of no other river which has carved itself for some two hundred miles a passage athwart successive ranges of mountains so that its waters, fed by the still higher mountain ranges of Western China, find themselves during and for some time after the rainy season compressed into a succession of surging rapids till they reach more open country just above Ichang. It was unluckily a season of unusually late rains and therefore of unusually difficult navigation. Often for hours together our junk had to be laboriously towed up by relays of sturdy boatmen pulling with a will at a long bamboo rope that was constantly strained almost to the breaking point when it had to be carried over some obstructing pinnacle – 150 feet, perhaps, above the river – and was strained beyond it when it snapped one day just before we had intended to tie up for the night. The torrent carried us in half an hour, not without many very anxious moments, several miles downstream before we could pull up into a backwater. Our old Chinese skipper fortunately never lost his nerve, though he deemed it wise at particularly critical moments to seize from the large bowl placed beside him for the purpose a handful of rice which he threw into the water to propitiate its evil spirits.

I had hoped to reach Tung Ching, the capital of Sze Chuan, but our progress was too slow, and I turned regretfully back from Wan Hsien, then so peaceful and friendly – in this respect like all the other small 'ports' on the Yangtze – that scarcely any place seemed more unlikely to witness, as it did a few months ago, a sanguinary affray between British gunboats

and Chinese revolutionists. Equally peaceful in those days was Shanghai, already the chief and most prosperous emporium of British trade and enterprise in the Far East. Like all the European settlements and concessions in China, its treaty rights of extra-territoriality were much appreciated by Chinese refugees, from Viceroys in disgrace to the humblest fugitive from oppression and misrule, who could count on shelter and justice under the protection of the foreign flag. The old Chinese city of Shanghai stood alongside but just beyond the European city, as if to provide a foil for the public order and cleanliness maintained in the handsome and well-lighted streets of the international settlement by displaying even more than the usual filth and misery common in varying degrees to all cities under Chinese administration.

I went North at the end of February, 1901, on the first steamer that left for Tientsin, as soon as the ice had begun to break in the Gulf of Tchih-li, and since my last visit a railway had been built – and only temporarily wrecked by the Boxers – by which I went on to Peking. But what a changed Peking it was! The barbaric glory of the old inviolate city had departed. It lay ravished and humbled at the mercy of the foreign invaders. It was not they, however, but the Boxers themselves who had played wanton havoc with it. It was they who pillaged and burnt all the picturesque bazaars with the costly stocks stored in them, and laid the commercially richest parts of the city in ashes. Nor was that all. They had, of course, tried to destroy all foreign buildings, but even the chief public offices of the capital they had not spared, not even the ancient Board of Rites, and in their frantic endeavour to reduce the British Legation which Sir Claude Macdonald's soldierly experience and gallant leadership converted into the centre of resistance as well as the last place of refuge for most of the small body of European residents, they had burnt down the ancient Hanlin Yuen, the priceless Imperial library with its unique collections of all the masterpieces of Chinese literature. The whole city was strewn with the wreckage of a

great orgy of destruction, but nothing impressed me more than the silence that had fallen on it. It had been divided up into different sections, each of which was assigned to one of the foreign contingents in possession of the capital. In the sections allotted respectively to the British and Americans and Japanese, public confidence had begun to revive, and the small people were resuming as far as they could their ordinary avocations. But in the Russian and German and in a lesser degree in the French section, terror still prevailed, and the streets were deserted save for the furtive figures of the few who had obtained a special badge or permit to leave their houses unmolested in the day-time.

Even the Forbidden City had been laid bare. The Dowager Empress and her Court, including the young Emperor, had fled to Siyan-fu, before the arrival of the foreign troops, and only the remnant of her large horde of eunuchs still wandered disconsolate and grown lean in the courtyards of the Winter Palace. Any foreigner armed with a military pass could roam about the sheltered parks where the 'old Buddha' had been used to take her pleasure, or penetrate even into the State apartments, where the walls, had they talked, could have revealed the many dark secrets they shared with the extraordinary old woman who, once merely an Imperial concubine, had risen to the plenitude of Imperial rank and power, and even as a fugitive in a remote province had still to be reckoned with by the foreign powers encamped within the desecrated precincts of her Forbidden City. 'One chamber was still littered with the elaborate articles of toilette she had used *pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage*, another with the painting materials with which, by no means an unskilled artist, she had been wont to beguile her leisure hours. Amongst a heap of lumber, chiefly tawdry musical clocks and mechanical toys, I came across a curious relic of two very different chapters of Russian policy with which I was already familiar. Before Tsar Alexander III had quarrelled with Prince Alexander of Bulgaria in the eighties, his Court

silversmiths had been commanded to make a large silver centrepiece for the Prince's table at Sofia with an allegorical figure of Russia as the Liberator of the Bulgarian people from the Turkish yoke. Then came the years of deep estrangement between Russia and Bulgaria. So it was never sent to its original destination, but remained a show-piece adorning the maker's splendid shop front on the Nevsky Prospect, where I had seen it to my great amusement during a visit to St. Petersburg in 1893. But when Russia in co-operation with Germany and France came to China's rescue after the Treaty of Shimonoseki and procured the retrocession of Port Arthur by Japan, the huge piece of plate, with some of the minor figures deftly converted from Bulgars into Manchus and a suitable inscription in which China was substituted for Bulgaria, had been despatched from St. Petersburg to Peking for presentation to the Son of Heaven as a reminder of the debt of gratitude he owed to Russian intervention.

It was in a wing of the Winter Palace that Field-Marshal von Waldersee established his headquarters as Generalissimo of the international forces – a title which none of the other powers openly challenged, though the Emperor had only secured its recognition in Europe by such a piece of diplomatic trickery that the Tsar Alexander III, when he discovered it, instructed his Ambassador in Berlin to intimate that he was only restrained from entering a public protest because *entre souverains on ne se donne pas de démenti.* Russia found her way round the difficulty by gradually withdrawing all her troops from Peking and employing them more usefully for her own purposes in a campaign of sheer conquest in Manchuria. Whilst the British and Japanese alone treated Waldersee with the deference due to his peculiar status, German officers and men went out of their way to express their contempt for the 'little yellow monkeys' from Japan and for our Indian troops, whom they called coolies, to the intense disgust of the gallant old Maharajah Sir Pertab Singh, who did not forget it when he served on the Western Front during

the Great War. On the other hand, to make up for their belated appearance on the scene, the Germans treated the Chinese to a foretaste of 'Hunnish frightfulness' in the punitive campaigns which they carried out on their own account far beyond the range of operations originally contemplated by the Allies, and however anxious one was for the sake of our common European reputation to discount the horrors related by the unfortunate Chinese, I could not help hearing the revolting stories over which some German officers gloated in the train to Tientsin, doubtless never imagining that an Englishman would understand what they were saying. Had I heard them a few days earlier I should have shrunk from going to pay a farewell visit to the Generalissimo before leaving Peking. It was a formal visit, and Waldersee, who had been wont to preside over pious meetings in Berlin, to the special edification of the Empress, discoursed to me unctuously on the great task of Western civilization in China. When I came away an A.D.C. kindly showed me a short cut through a number of courtyards at the back of the German headquarters. I noticed that they were closely packed with huge cases already addressed and ready for despatch to Berlin, and the A.D.C. remarked laughingly; 'Oh yes, those are all little presents for his Majesty.' They contained in fact the loot reserved for the Kaiser, and there was enough of it to fill an ordinary goods train. A few days later a great fire broke out in that wing of the Palace in which the German Chief of the Staff, a distinguished officer, lost his life, and most of the Imperial loot was, I believe, consumed by the flames. The Chinese, and not only the Chinese, saw in the disaster a not undeserved Nemesis.

During the whole of my stay on that occasion in Peking the interminable negotiations dragged on between the foreign representatives and the Chinese commissioners, who for a time included Li Hung-Chang, as to the terms of peace to be imposed upon China. None was prone to be more despondent over the task in front of him than the British Minister,

Sir Edward Satow, who had been Minister at Tokyo until his recent transfer to Peking. He had a profound knowledge of the Far East, having joined the Consular Service in Japan as far back as 1861, i.e. during the difficult period of transition from feudal conditions to the modern system of government on Western lines. Like the fine Japanese scholar that he was, he had made an equal study of Chinese literature and history, and he realized perhaps more fully than any of his colleagues the gravity of the blow which had been dealt to old China. We used sometimes to walk together on the forty-foot-broad ramparts abutting on to the great walls of Peking, for these were now also available for foreigners, and I remember particularly one bleak morning in March, 1901 – it was Good Friday and there was therefore no Conference – when we paced the ramparts to and fro within the limits of the British section for upwards of two hours in a cutting wind straight from the Great Desert of Obi, and as we looked down on the one side on the desecrated city with its many patches of charred and blackened ruins, and on the other side on to the dull waste plain across which trailed the smoke of a railway engine, I felt as I listened to him that we were watching the end of one immensely long age in the world's history and the beginning of another age of which none could foresee the trend.

CHAPTER XVI

WAR AND REVOLUTION IN THE FAR EAST

I BROUGHT home the conviction that whilst China was crumbling hopelessly to pieces, Russia was steering deliberately for a conflict with Japan, and that the preservation of our great interests in the Far East, and indeed in Asia generally, required the closest possible co-operation between Great Britain and Japan. As I enjoyed the confidence of the Japanese Minister in London as well as of the Foreign Office, I was not altogether a stranger to the negotiations which resulted in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, and when a very few days after the outbreak of war between China and Japan I happened to be lecturing at the Royal Naval College at Woolwich, I had little hesitation in expressing my belief that the Japanese would defeat the Russians wherever they met them, on land as on sea. I was no military or naval expert, but could there be any doubt as to the result? Partly at the insidious prompting of Berlin, and partly at the instigation of a clique of greedy and ambitious adventurers in the Far East, Russia, unwieldy and unready, had gone into the war as just a paltry 'colonial' war, to which a corrupt bureaucracy and the light-hearted world of St. Petersburg remained until it was too late almost wholly indifferent. Japan, on the other hand, with a steadfastness of national purpose steeled by the consciousness that her whole future was at stake, went into the war at a moment when, having borrowed from the West its modern standards of efficiency and organization and discipline, she still retained all the virile qualities of her own ancient civilization.

Her amazing victories nevertheless took many even of her friends by surprise, and amongst them President Roosevelt. In October, 1904, he sent me a message through our mutual friend, Cecil Spring Rice, to the effect that he wanted me to go

over and see him at Washington. We had only met quite casually before, and it was a most unexpected invitation. But it was one that neither Printing House Square nor I could or desired to refuse. He welcomed me with the greater cordiality, saying that he knew me already quite well through Spring Rice and through my connection with *The Times*, and he added with a boisterous laugh and his teeth gleaming at me: 'I believe you are the godfather of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and I congratulate you,' and then more seriously: 'We must have a heart-to-heart talk about this war. It's the biggest thing of our times. To-morrow morning I shall be as free as I ever am. Will that suit you? But mind – no interview – and you had better keep your mouth shut whilst you are in Washington. There are pressmen round her who would pull the gold stuffing out of your back teeth!' I was at the White House the next morning before ten, and he kept me for over three hours. Other callers were occasionally shown in, whom he dismissed in a few minutes – and one of them, as I could not help hearing, with a very big flea in his ear – and sometimes he would be fetched to join for a short time in what I understood to be a Cabinet Meeting going on beyond ear-shot at a large table at the further end of the very long room in which we were sitting.

It was an extraordinary conversation, and I need hardly say the President did most of the talking, though he did not take it amiss when I sometimes had to interrupt him, as for instance when he spoke of the Pacific as 'our ocean,' and remind him that it contained amongst others some very large islands such as Australia and New Zealand which were not American! He talked volubly and emphatically and often with obvious exaggeration. More than any great man I have ever met, except perhaps Chinese Gordon in the conversation I have recorded in an earlier chapter, Roosevelt seemed to possess a disconcerting capacity to concentrate his whole vision successively on different facets of the question under discussion and express himself so categorically on each one of them in turn that one might have fancied that was his last word on the whole sub-

ject. He started his conversation with me by saying: 'This war has got to be stopped, and *The Times* has got to help me to stop it,' but towards the end of it, looking at the clock and remarking that it was time to adjourn for lunch, he concluded by saying, with almost equal emphasis: 'Well, sir, I guess they must be left to fight it out – like the Kilkenny cats!' When I observed that we had got a very long way off from his first appeal to me to help him stop the war, he broke out again into one of his loud laughs: 'Now then, Mr. Chirol, remember this is not an interview, and what I have been saying to you is just what has happened to be uppermost in my thoughts. It is a mighty big proposition and we have got to look at it all round and from every point of view. What I want to know is whether, when the time comes and I can do something to bring Russia and Japan together and make peace, your people are going to help or are going to back up your Japanese friends in demanding the last pound of Russia's flesh.' I had no hesitation in reassuring him on that point, and in the following year it was largely his influence that brought Russia and Japan together at the Washington Conference, when, after very laborious travail, the Washington Peace Treaty emerged from it.

Roosevelt, when I saw him, was evidently obsessed by two conflicting apprehensions. All his sympathies were with the Japanese, who had been recklessly provoked to war by Russia's aggressive policy for years past in the Far East, and he did not want to see them robbed, as they had been in 1895, of the legitimate fruits of their victories. But he dreaded the intervention of other European Powers. 'France,' he said, 'cannot afford, as Russia's ally in Europe, to see her hopelessly beaten, and the Kaiser knows that, if she is, the Tsar will never forgive him for having egged him into this war,' and he did not think a revival of the Russo-Franco-German association of 1895 to be entirely out of the question. I replied that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had so far served to keep the ring for Japan and would, I believed, continue to do so to the end. 'Yes, that's

so, and that's why I welcome that Alliance. But still it might yet mean a broadening of the war into a world war, and that is why I don't want any European intervention, even in the way of peace talk, for you would all fall out over it. We are the only people who might talk peace without doing mischief.' Then he proceeded to give me a number of reasons, partly domestic, partly economic, partly of foreign policy, for which the restoration of peace in the Far East was an American interest of the first order. The future of China was very much in his thoughts. America wanted a strong and peaceful China for her trade, and not for her trade only. William II had talked a great deal of nonsense, and very mischievous nonsense, about the Yellow Peril. But still, if Russia had been a great danger to China, there would be danger to China too from a sort of Japanese overlordship as the result of Japan's victory, and a coalition of the two great yellow races under Japanese leadership might be an equal danger for all Western nations that have interests in the Far East. Or China might run amuck altogether, though she probably would not stir so long as the old Empress was alive and preferred to rule over a dead China rather than be sent packing by a live China. These were amongst the arguments he poured out for stopping the war. But then his mind worked round to another train of thought, which brought him gradually to the opposite conclusion that there would be many distinct advantages in letting the war go on till both belligerents were exhausted in a struggle which, from the military point of view, was bound to end in a stalemate. Russia could never retrieve the defeats she had already suffered, but Japan could not hope to make much further headway. She had neither the men nor the money to go on fighting indefinitely. If the war were stopped before the Japanese were compelled to recognize those limitations, their heads might be turned, and with her Asiatic Exclusion policy, America might be confronted with just those awkward questions of racial equality and reciprocity of treatment which a young and high-spirited nation intoxicated with victory would

be likely to raise. No doubt the Pacific was a very large ocean. 'But we don't want the Japanese to come trailing their men-of-war right across *our* ocean, and if they did we don't want the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to intrude itself between them and us.' And so Roosevelt ended by flatly contradicting the view he had begun by expressing with such vigour. We never had another 'heart-to-heart' talk, but I came home with a fairly definite comprehension of what was at the back of his mind, and though he was rather puzzled by the opposite views held by my old chief, Mackenzie Wallace, and by Morrison of Peking, who were sent to represent *The Times* during the Washington Peace Conference and had respectively rather strong leanings, the former towards Russia, and the latter towards Japan, he conveyed to me afterwards a friendly message to the effect that they had both been very useful in promoting a peaceful settlement.

None of Roosevelt's remarks had been shrewder than those he made to me about China. The 'old Buddha' sat on the safety-valve as long as she lived, but the significance of Japan's victories over a great European power, which sent a thrill of racial pride throughout Asia, was not lost upon the Chinese. They read into them a striking lesson as to the value of Western knowledge. China had despised it, and for her pains she had been trampled into the dust, whilst the 'little yellow dwarfs,' who had been quick to adopt Western learning, had laid the Russian giant prostrate. Chinese students flocked to Japan and returned imbued with new ideas which spread throughout the rising generation in Peking and in most of the larger centres of urban life. In the last years of the reign even the Dowager Empress had had to make some concessions to the growing demand for reforms and Western education and she, at any rate, sanctioned the opening of schools and colleges, for which the demand rapidly outgrew the supply.

When I went back to China in 1909 she had died, on November 14, 1908, having arranged just in time that the unfortunate

Emperor Kuang Hsu should not live to reign in her stead. He predeceased her by one day. His infant nephew, who was to be the last Manchu Emperor, was a negligible quantity. The end of the dynasty was close at hand. Peking had again undergone many changes. There were two railway stations within the walls, and there were motor-cars and a few fairly good roads for them to travel on. There was frequent social intercourse between foreigners and Chinese, and high-born Manchu ladies and the leaders of a new feminine movement, mostly young ladies from Shanghai in black silk breeches and short coats down to their knees, could be seen having five-o'clock tea and even dancing at the grand new Hôtel des Wagons-Lits. The Nationalist movement was still in its infancy, and mostly in American leading-strings. Newspapers had sprung up like mushrooms. Education and reform were on everybody's lips and revolution was already in the air, especially in the schools and colleges, where, though still muttered only in undertones, the word Republic fascinated a young China in a hurry to scrap all her old creeds and institutions at the same time as 'the five Ching' and 'the four Shu,' the great classics of Confucian education, which had moulded and governed for 2,500 years the social and political life of their ancestors.

The Chinese Republic was not proclaimed till 1912, and then Peking was turned almost at once into a cockpit of political factions and personal ambitions sometimes as squalid and corrupt as in the old days of the Manchus. Yuan Shih Kai, who, in 1900, had used the one relatively effective army that China then possessed to restrain the spread of anarchism, when it was called Boxerism, imported militarism into the young Chinese Republic not merely for his own aggrandisement, but to save it as he believed from degenerating into new forms of anarchy. He failed to make himself Emperor, and died in 1916. Japan's unwise attempt to exploit the Great War in order to establish the sort of overlordship in China which President Roosevelt had apprehended, pulled the Chinese

to some extent together in resisting the 'twenty-one Articles' of the Japanese ultimatum. There was still a Peking Republican Government more or less recognized throughout China when I met her delegates at the Paris Peace Conference – an amazingly different type from the pig-tailed old Mandarins whom I had seen at the Board of Foreign Affairs in 1895. They were mostly young men with their hair carefully trimmed and their clothes well cut in the latest European fashion, talking excellent English, generally with a strong American accent, as many of them had studied in American Universities, all of them familiar with the latest *formulæ* of Western politics – self-determination, freedom for all nations, equality of rights and opportunities, etc. They put up a formal demand for the recognition of complete racial equality by the Peace Conference. But it was rejected, and its rejection not only gave such an impetus to the most extreme form of Nationalism in China that the Government of the Chinese Republic was constrained to refuse its signature to the Peace Treaties, but a deadly blow was dealt to the prestige of a Central Government already undermined by provincial discontent and the old rivalry between North and South. Meaner militarists, to whom Yuan Shih Kai had set a dangerous example, saw their opportunity. Rival Tuchuns and their predatory armies overran province after province, and the veteran revolutionist, Sun Yat Sen, whom the British Government had once saved from the clutches of the old Dowager Empress, called upon Canton to rise against the Tuchuns and Peking and British Imperialism, embracing all three in his furious denunciations and calling in the Bolshevist to aid him. He, too, is dead, but the alliance between Chinese Nationalism and Russian Bolshevism has lived after him, and apart from the consequences which directly affect all Powers and all foreigners in China, it has shattered for the first time the whole framework of the centralized State which the genius of the first Chin Emperor built up 2,000 years ago out of a loose feudal confederacy, and it has torn from all its ancient moorings, social and religious,

the most conservative people in Asia, numbering about a sixth of the human race. If Japan shows the greatest constructive change I have witnessed in my lifetime, China shows the destructive one.

CHAPTER XVII

THE 'GOOD OLD DAYS' IN INDIA

'STUDY the past, observe the present, and never prophesy when you write about India' was the wise advice given to me many years ago by Sir Alfred Lyall, than whom few have written about India with greater knowledge and understanding. To point the moral, he bade me take warning by no less a man than Macaulay, one of the finest intellects we have ever sent out to India, who committed himself to the very wildest prediction which any Englishman has uttered since we entered upon the great experiment of ruling from this small island on the extreme fringe of Europe a great Asiatic sub-continent with a population even further removed from us in terms of race, religion, and language than in geographical distance. He boldly affirmed that with the introduction of Western education with the English as its medium there would be nothing left after a few generations to distinguish educated Indians from educated Englishmen except the colour of their skins. During the latter half of the period that has elapsed since that prophecy I have been seventeen times in India on shorter or longer visits, and have spent there altogether some six or seven years. There are very few parts of India that I have not seen, and the more I have seen of that vast country, the deeper has been my interest in the life and thought of its multitudinous peoples. Little more than a year ago I gave in my last book on *India*,[1] the considered conclusions to which, in accordance with Lyall's wise advice, my study of the past and my observations of the present has brought me, without venturing to indulge in predictions which the future might falsify as utterly as the event has belied Macaulay's, and in these pages I shall record chiefly a few personal experiences whilst I have watched India travel along a very different road from that which

[1] *India*, in the Modern World Series, edited by Mr. Herbert Fisher, and published by Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1926.

Macaulay so confidently mapped out for her nearly a century ago.

I often hear to-day men of my own generation talking regretfully of 'the good old days' in India, but the most obstinate *laudator temporis acti* would, I am sure, rebel to-day against the conditions under which one had to travel out to India some forty years ago on the best Indian mail steamers. My first voyage was on one of the largest P. & O. steamers then afloat, but it was a steamer of less than 3,000 tons, as against the 20,000 tons of the *Malwa* and the *Maloya* to-day. Most of the male passengers were herded in four-berth cabins in which, if it was at all rough, the portholes had to be closed, and ventilation there was then none. There were, of course, no electric fans nor any electric lighting. The swinging and generally malodorous oil lamps in the saloons were pitilessly extinguished at 10 p.m., and if we sat up to enjoy the fresh air on deck after 10.30, we had to grope our way to our berths and undress in the dim light that reached the cabins from the few little night lamps left burning in the alley way. No smoking was allowed on deck, except right aft, and a very small smoking-room, also right aft, was regarded as a remarkable concession to smokers, who on most steamers had still to be content with a little canvas shelter rigged up for them on wet days. All the saloon as well as most of the cabin accommodation was abaft the engines, i.e. in the stern of the ship, and many of the cabins opened out of the dining saloon, so that even during meals the best sailors might be constantly reminded of the very audible sufferings of their less fortunate fellow-travellers. The food, too, was very different, for there were no refrigerators and only an inadequate amount of livestock. Besides the cow that provided milk for the children, sheep and poultry were carried on the foredeck, and they added, at any rate, some speculative excitement to the voyage when passengers backed their fancy to survive the ship's cook's next lethal roll-call. Not only was one young and easily amused, but one's fellow travellers were fewer – seldom more than forty or fifty on the voyage – and

more sociable than on a ship that carries three hundred or four hundred as often happens to-day.

Once one was landed in India, travelling by railway was perhaps, for the same reason, more comfortable on the whole than it is to-day, though the railway system has been very greatly extended. For there was no rush of European and American tourists such as the cold weather now brings every year in rapidly increasing numbers. And as the Indians, who were then still called 'natives' – and did not mind it – never travelled in the first-class carriages reserved 'for Europeans only,' one could always rely upon ample room to stretch out full length in the daytime as well as at night, and though there were no dining-cars, one could otherwise enjoy all the advantages of a sleeping-car train without its stuffiness – a very great boon in a sub-continent in which journeys of twenty-four hours and forty-eight hours are the rule rather than the exception. The electric light and fans hardly make up now for the frequent overcrowding. Any large Indian railway station was, as it still is to-day, a bewildering microcosm of India, never empty, never silent, by day or by night, always full of Indian sounds and Indian smells, the camping ground for hours at a time of Indian travellers and their families with their strange goods and chattels, water jugs and cooking pots, waiting patiently for the train without ever inquiring when it would start, and making a frenzied haphazard rush for anyone that happened to come along, trusting to chance that it would take them to their destination, until the perspiring but always civil guard managed to bundle them out of the wrong carriages into which they had tumultuously packed themselves. Railway travelling is one of the Western innovations to which Indians of all classes have taken most readily. They have always had the love of travel, due perhaps to the ancient custom of mass pilgrimages to popular shrines near and far, which still brings half a million pilgrims to Puri from all parts of India during the great days when the worship of Jugernath reaches its climax, and the fan-shaped terminus of the branch line

from the Calcutta-Madras railway is busier than Epsom Downs station on Derby day. One had to resort more often to the elephant, the buffalo cart, or the more rapid palki borne on the shoulders of stalwart runners, as the only means of conveyance when there were many more tracts of country to which railways had not penetrated, and motor roads still belonged to an undreamt-of future. One had also more often occasion to be grateful for the rest-houses provided by a paternal Government in out-of-the-way parts of the country, and, scanty as was their furniture, they were at least cleaner and lighter than most of the so-called hotels in the European style which even in the larger towns were singularly dingy and unappetizing. Even to-day, in spite of the vast inflow of European travellers, there are very few hotels that come near to modern standards of cleanliness, let alone of comfort. Fortunately, one often found abundant compensation in the friendly hospitality which Englishmen, officials, merchants or planters, freely extended to their fellow-countrymen. A very modest purse went a long way. If one's ambition did not run to tigers or bisons, sport was plentiful and cost very little. So did ponies, and if even a great city like Calcutta could only boast rather funereal-looking one-horse *gharries* as the ordinary and decidedly stuffy mode of conveyance, their fares were very low in comparison with the London hansom or four-wheeler of the same period.

In Egypt and Turkey I had seen chiefly the picturesque disorder of the East with all its purple patches and frayed edges; for though they were much nearer Europe, the impact of the West had barely yet affected the Oriental type of Turkish and Egyptian government. In India, thanks to British rule, one felt at once the stability of an organized system working according to plan. The outward signs of Western civilization were far more frequent and tangible. It was not the tattered and battered East still struggling against the disciplined methods of the West. Everything seemed so trim and tidy that, with all its novelty and picturesqueness, Indian travel

had none of the savour of adventure which the vicissitudes of the day's march and the night's resting-place seldom entirely lacked in the Near East. India had its sights and smells and noises, which, if generically Eastern, had a peculiar quality of their own, but one got almost away from them in some of the large cities which bore the manifest impress of the West, and every up-country 'station' had its little patch of typically English life, carefully hedged in and guarded against its Indian surroundings – and knowing and caring, I thought, singularly little about them. But it was India and her strange life that I had come out to see, and the little I then succeeded in seeing was enough to stimulate the interest for which the reading of a good many books had, however inadequately, prepared me. Already familiar with some of the Mohammedan East, it was the novel and peculiar mystery of Hindu life that chiefly attracted and repelled me. I had then only a bird's-eye view of India, though a fairly extensive one, as, having landed from Europe in Ceylon, I travelled North through the Madras Presidency, and then from Calcutta to the Punjab and down the Indus valley to Karachi, where I embarked for Persia, and what stirred my imagination far more than the marble halls and domes and mosques of Moghul India, was the gloomy phantasmagoria of Hindu temples peopled with terrific deities, or the queer little wayside shrines in which the humbler folk prayed to an elephant-headed Ganesh smeared over with red paint, or offered a bowl of milk to the snake god to keep away the hooded cobra from their own village. Within a few miles of the modern business quarter of Calcutta, and of the stately houses on Chowringhee, in one of which, already converted into the Bengal Club, Macaulay had once lived, I visited the great temple of Kali the Mother, with her red tongue and her garland of skulls, and one of her six arms holding up the severed head of a victim on whose prostrate body she was dancing, and amongst the dense crowd of worshippers I saw black-coated Bengalis, graduates from the schools and colleges he had planned for them, kiss the feet of the ministering Brah-

mins and pay their dues for the cost of the sacrificial goat to be immolated to the great goddess. Yet Kali was at the same time the Mother, the loving and the loved Mother! Still more bewildering was – especially in Southern India, the stronghold of Brahmanical orthodoxy – the warp and woof of Hindu life on the inexorable loom of caste, and at Benares the faith in an endless cycle of birth and death and rebirth that wreathed the crowded bathing-ghats of the Ganges with the smoke of funeral pyres and scattered the ashes of the dead upon the shining waters of the sacred river. But India is not a country of populous cities; there are not a hundred towns altogether of over 500 inhabitants. It is a country of vast drab spaces with innumerable drab villages dotted about them, and the deepest impression they made upon me – and one which every subsequent visit to India has renewed – was the drab melancholy which seemed to brood over the whole land – partly the melancholy of strange creeds and social inhibitions that paralyse the individual energies of the human soul, and partly the melancholy of the blind struggle for existence waged against the often pitiless forces of nature by a countless peasantry almost constantly near the edge, and sometimes over the edge, of actual starvation.

But side by side with the ancient India, scarcely touched with the breath of Western civilization, there were also symptoms of India's new reaction to the British *raj*. It was not that aspect of India that I had gone out to study, but I found myself directly confronted with it in the turmoil of the Ilbert Bill. India had enjoyed more that five-and-twenty years of unbroken peace at home since the storm of the Great Mutiny, but the memories of terrible excesses on the one side and of fierce repression on the other were still smouldering and they flickered up suddenly when, in the third year of his Viceroyalty, Lord Ripon brought in a measure, technically termed the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill, which at once provoked an extraordinary outburst of racial passion. Ripon had been sent out by Mr. Gladstone to initiate a more liberal policy

towards Indians than that pursued by his predecessor, Lord Lytton, who had been Disraeli's nominee. But the Ilbert Bill, to which the Viceroy himself had not originally attached great importance, was far less an integral part of his programme of Indian reforms than a normal outcome of administrative necessities, which required the extension to Indian magistrates in rural districts of the powers to try Europeans with which, whether Europeans or Indians, they were already invested in the three great Presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Englishmen chose, nevertheless, to see in this measure a dangerous invasion of their rights, and when Lord Ripon's supporters dared to suggest that Indian rights had also to be taken into consideration, the leading European organ in Calcutta, *The Englishman*, replied with the characteristic statement that 'the only people who have any right to India are the British; the so-called Indians have no right whatever.' Into the details of the controversy there is no need for me to enter now. I had neither the knowledge nor the inclination to go into them at the time, but what I saw and what made a lasting impression on me was the revelation of intense racial bitterness. Englishmen denounced the Bill as a deliberate attempt to 'put the native on the *gaddi*,' and Indians denounced all opposition to it as a shameless repudiation of Queen Victoria's great Proclamation of 1858. The revolt of the Europeans was not confined to the unofficial community, but found aiders and abettors amongst British officials in all the public services. In the heat of the moment a scheme was even concocted in Calcutta for seizing the Viceroy and putting him forcibly on board ship for deportation out of India. The storm had somewhat subsided by the time I reached Calcutta, for the Viceroy, though appointed from England by a powerful Liberal government with a large majority in the House of Commons behind it, had been driven to whittle down all the chief provisions of the Bill under such pressure of angry European opinion in India that Indians had some excuse for describing it as sheer lawlessness. But the atmosphere was still

electric, and though I had certainly no pro-Indian bias, it came as a severe shock to me when at a large men's dinner party my host, who was a prominent member of the English community, after proposing the health of the Queen Empress as 'the first loyal toast' went on to propose 'Damnation to the Viceroy' as a second loyal toast.

The echoes of the storm reverberated in England, but the Parliamentary debates proceeded for the most part on the usual party lines. The shrewdest comment of all was a cartoon in *Punch* which represented Lord Ripon as a Mahout driving an Indian elephant with a group of Anglo-Indians in the howdah behind him, who were shaking their fists at him and seemed on the point of laying violent hands upon him. The cartoon was called 'The Anglo-Indian Mutiny: a bad example for the elephant.' One immediate result could hardly have been foreshadowed with greater prescience. The success of the Europeans' agitation against the Ilbert Bill was an object-lesson to the Indians in the power of organized agitation for political purposes, and their reply to it was the foundation in the following year of the Indian National Congress as an organization through which, in default of regular representative assemblies, the Western-educated Indian could make his voice heard not only in India but in England, and, for the first few years at least, made it heard with a greater regard for lawful forms and methods than Anglo-Indians had shown in their campaign against the Ilbert Bill.

I had left India before the first meeting of the Congress, but I became acquainted afterwards with several of its most conspicuous members, men who had been educated or who had lived in England, who had studied our history and our political institutions, and whose habits of political thought and political aspirations were derived almost entirely from their intercourse with Englishmen. The gratitude of India for the immense benefits conferred upon her by British rule has never found more eloquent expression than in the speech delivered in the following year by the President of the Indian

National Congress, the veteran Parsee, Dadabhai Naoroji, once an M.P. at Westminster, at whom Lord Salisbury flung one of his most unfortunate gibes when he referred to him as a 'black man,' and whom Indians afterwards acclaimed as 'the Grand Old Man of India.' English was then the only language spoken in the Congress, and indeed the only language in which Indians, with their own multiplicity of vernaculars, seldom understood outside their own linguistic areas, could exchange political ideas largely derived from their Western education. Naoroji's speech was delivered in English, of which, like many other Indians, he was a thorough master, and years afterwards when, cold-shouldered and viewed with intense jealousy and suspicion by English officialdom in India, the Congress and Naoroji himself had already drifted into stormy waters, he asked me to read it as the profession of Western-educated India's faith in British rule 'which is not dead but sleepeth, and can still be quickened to new life if you will only utter the saving word which your own history and the history of the whole British Empire outside India might surely have long since taught you.'

The 'saving word' for which the old man was passionately pleading was the promise of Self-Government as the goal of British policy in India. In the turmoil of the Bengal partition it seemed to me then, I confess, entirely beyond the range of practical politics, but it was uttered some ten years later in the stress of the Great War, and emphasized again when the Government of India Act of 1919 gave India her present constitutional charter. But it has certainly not yet resulted in that quickening of India's faith in British rule which Naoroji and the Western-educated Indians of his generation, now almost entirely past away, were wont to predict. Did it come, after all, too soon and too abruptly? Or was it too long delayed and only conceded reluctantly to persistent and even sometimes menacing pressure? It is easy to be wise after the event, but as I look back upon the past in the light of longer and more mature experience it seems to me now that during my very

first visit to India forty-three years ago I witnessed, with however little understanding at the time, in the furious outburst of racial passion to which the Ilbert Bill gave rise, the beginning of India's estrangement from Western influence which constitutes one of the gravest and still unsolved problems of the governance of India. The history of British rule in India is an unparalleled record of splendid and enduring achievements, but it would be more than human did it not also show many lost opportunities. Had the great bureaucracy which has been the chief instrument in the making of British India kept more steadily in mind the definition given by one of the greatest of British administrators, Sir Thomas Munro, just over a hundred years ago, of England's mission in India as 'the training of Indians to govern and protect themselves,' the Indian National Congress, even though it may have boasted overmuch when it began to call itself 'an informal Parliament of the Indian people,' would not have been treated with the scorn and suspicion that were repaid only too abundantly in increasing bitterness until, after the fulfilment of the most sanguine hopes of constitutional advancement which the founders of the Congress would ever have ventured to entertain, an assembly which still calls itself the Indian National Congress, though composed of very different elements from those that had stood sponsors to it in 1884, thrilled to Gandhi's denunciations, not only of British rule, but of Western civilization. This happened in 1921, when I was at Nagpur in the course of my last visit to India.

About half-way in point of time between the ebb of the strong tide on which up to the eighties Western influence had been borne along with the one temporary check of the Mutiny all through the nineteenth century, and the backwash of reaction against it which reached its high-water mark with the confluence of the Non-Co-operation Movement and the Caliphate agitation after the Great War, Lord Curzon staged the great Imperial Durbar of 1903 as a splendid apotheosis not only of British rule, but of his own Viceroyalty as its

triumphant embodiment. He was the high-priest of British efficiency, which was for him the hall-mark of our racial superiority, and as such he was intensely impatient of the political pretensions of the Indian National Congress and of the claims of Western-educated Indians to a larger share in the administration of their country, though they were the product of an educational system largely created and fully controlled by the State, in which he himself, being essentially an intellectual, took a keen intellectual interest. It was not merely his keen eye for the picturesque settings of Indian history but his ingrained conservatism that led him to assign the foremost place in that spectacular display of the gorgeous East not to the more modern India under direct British rule where Western influence has the largest field of action, but to the archaic India of the Native States, in many of which the spirit and the methods of medieval despotism still widely survive under their hereditary chiefs and princes. As a spectacle, Curzon's Durbar was unsurpassable, and on the day of the great procession of the Native States round the arena of the Durbar – the 'circus,' as a disgruntled ruling chief resentfully whispered to me, who was, however, frequently insane and was therefore deposed not long afterwards – the India of the great Moghul Empire seemed really to have been conjured once more into life on the plain of Delhi. With all their banners waving to the cool winter breeze, with their huge painted elephants, with their swaying camels and their gaily caparisoned horses, manes and tails dyed red with henna, with the discordant music of their uncouth bands, with their motley ranks of fighting men in coats of mail and ancient armour, the Native States were mustering each in its appointed place for the well-rehearsed procession with which the Princes of the land, Rajput Hindus claiming descent from the Sun and the Moon, Mohammedans recalling long centuries of Islamic domination, Mahrattas and Sikhs who had first raised the standard of rebellion against the decaying Moghul Empire, were to pay homage to the Duke of Connaught as the deputy of the far-off

sovereign who had recently succeeded to an Indian Empire that stretched from the Himalayan Roof of the World to Cape Comorin. Under the deep blue sky in a haze of dust and sunshine with the red sandstone walls and the white marble domes of Imperial Delhi in the background, it was indeed a pageant of Empire and of history that defied description.

The whole organization of the Durbar was a triumph of efficiency for the Viceregal impresario. Yet there were two small incidents that for a moment struck slightly discordant notes, and both betrayed the sensitiveness of Indians and of Europeans alike as soon as religious sentiment or racial pride is however lightly touched. There was nearly an uproar amongst the Mohammedan population when it was discovered that Lord Curzon's specially invited guests from England, who had been accommodated with seats in the arcaded galleries of the Great Mosque to witness the State entry, had been eating ham sandwiches and other viands abhorred by the followers of Mohammed within the sacred precincts. And again it was from the enclosure reserved for those guests at the great Review that proceeded the loudest cheers when the 9th Lancers marched past the saluting point. It was a crack regiment and looked it. But that was not the reason for the prolonged and demonstrative cheering. Everyone, Europeans and Indians, knew that the white crowd was cheering the white troopers who had got into trouble with the Viceroy for handling natives too roughly.

Three years later I was again in India at the time of the first visit of the present King and Queen, who were then still Prince and Princess of Wales. Only a few days after they had landed at Bombay, Lord Curzon, who had stayed in India to greet them on their arrival, handed over the Viceroyalty to his successor, Lord Minto, and sailed for home. He had resigned after a protracted struggle with the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, over the latter's scheme for reorganizing the higher administration of the Indian army. The principle for which Curzon had stood, namely the subordination

of the military to the civil authority, seemed to me then, and still seems to me, essentially sound. I was at home when the controversy was reaching its acutest stage. The question did not fall within my province as Director of the Foreign Department of *The Times*, but I often talked it over with the Editor, who had been on friendly terms with Curzon ever since their Oxford days and had a great admiration for him, and I could place Curzon's own views before him in the long and almost weekly letters I received from him. Colonel Repington, who was then the military expert at Printing House Square, was, however, generally a week ahead of me with even fuller materials for pressing Kitchener's case, regularly supplied to him from Indian army headquarters. Kitchener seemed to me to have lowered himself by entering into such confidential relations with a man on whose character he had as Sirdar in Egypt himself passed the gravest censure, and I told him so frankly when I was again not long afterwards in Calcutta and he began to reprove me for having backed Curzon against him. He replied equally frankly that when he was driven to fight he could not afford to be 'too squeamish' as to the instruments he used, and then went on to render a handsome tribute to Curzon, whom he had fought all the more reluctantly 'as it was he who, as Viceroy, brought me to India as Commander-in-Chief.'

From Curzon's correspondence with me the last thing I should have inferred was that he had not fully made up his mind to resign if the Cabinet's decision sacrificed the principle by which he was determined to stand or fall. Had he done so he would have carried a large body of public opinion with him, and the strongest member of his Executive Council, Sir Denzil Ibbetson, told me that he himself and perhaps one or two of his colleagues would have resigned with him. But Curzon made the mistake of first accepting, however reluctantly, a compromise on the question of principle and then resigning six months later on what appeared to be a merely personal issue, when the new post of Military Supply Member in the

Viceroy's Council was filled by the appointment from London not of the officer he had urgently asked for, but of another who enjoyed Kitchener's confidence and had been strongly supported by him. I believe he had felt quite confident of carrying his point, and he never fully realized how deeply his overbearing attitude during his one visit to London whilst he was Viceroy had irritated several members of the Cabinet, and chief amongst them Mr. St. John Brodrick (now Lord Midleton), who was Secretary of State for India.

That his resignation should have been accepted was a terrible blow to his pride, but I can bear testimony to the dignity and fortitude with which he bore it. He remained to the end the great Viceroy that with all his defects of character and his mistakes of policy history will almost certainly pronounce him to have been. As an administrator he was unquestionably the greatest of all modern Viceroys, and his extraordinary industry and intellect have left their mark on almost every branch of the Indian administration. In later years we drifted apart when he grew more and more intolerant of any difference of opinion, but we had been friends since his early days in London, when he lived a strenuous life in a small flat immediately under my own at the top of St. Ermin's Mansions, and was glad to write for *The Times* on his occasional journeys of political exploration in Persia and Central Asia. I had frequently been his guest during his Viceroyalty, not only in India but on his memorable cruise in the Persian Gulf at the end of 1903, and he had valued the support I had done my best to give him throughout his controversy with Kitchener when public opinion at home was for the most part against him. So he invited me to go with him to Agra during the few days which he had to kill between his reception in Bombay of the Prince and Princess of Wales and the arrival of his successor, Lord Minto. He and Lady Curzon, his beautiful consort, who had adorned the splendours of his Viceroyalty and who shared his cruel disappointment with perhaps a sharper touch of bitterness than his own, had decided to pay

one more visit to the ancient city which he loved best of all in India. In the work which he did for preserving and restoring the ancient monuments of India, he established an enduring and undisputed title to her gratitude, and nowhere had he done more than at Agra. As soon as we got there he was again entirely absorbed in studying with his critical eye the progress of the work carried out year after year under his orders and often under his personal supervision. We spent two whole mornings in the Fort exploring every treasured corner of Shah Jehan's palace that was ultimately his prison, lingering in the Persian garden of the Taj Mahal, measuring the growth of the young cypress trees which Curzon had himself seen planted, and listening to the story of the new lamp he had hung within the immortal shrine. Once we drove out and spent the day at Fattehpur Sikri, the dead city conjured up almost overnight at Akbar's bidding and deserted a dozen years later because the water supply failed. During that short period Akbar, at the height of his power, held his court there. Curzon seemed to know its every stone and legend, and he delighted perhaps most of all in the Hall of Disputations, where the Moghul Emperor, revolving already in his mind the promulgation of a new and eclectic creed to promote the social and religious fusion of his many peoples, presided over discussions on theology as well as on art and poetry and literature between the representatives of different schools of thought, including even Jesuit Fathers, whom his splendid hospitality attracted to his court. I told Curzon laughingly that if I were a Hindu I should almost believe that in a former stage of existence he must have been Akbar himself, to which he replied quite seriously, with that touch of bombast which so often irritated those who knew him less well: 'I know nothing of former stages of existence, but I may tell you, my dear Chirol, that I can always feel myself to be living the very life of all the great men of whom I read in history.' In a much lighter vein he attended one evening a farewell dinner given to him at the Club by members

of the Public Services then at Agra. He had already delivered himself of his great farewell oration to India at the Byculla Club at Bombay. At Agra he responded to the toast of his health in a short but brilliant little speech full of delightful humour and rare *bonhomie*. Then, on that as on every evening, he sat up into the small hours of the morning preparing a long memorandum in which he wished to give his successor the fullest survey possible of the situation which he was leaving behind him in India. This, he believed, had never been done before by a departing Viceroy, and he was determined that if there was to be any breach of continuity in Indian policy, it should not be due to any failure on his part to place Lord Minto in possession of all pertinent facts. He had, moreover, made arrangements for having a whole day with Lord Minto in Bombay for a heart-to-heart talk between them, and intense was his annoyance when, on the journey down from Agra, he learnt that owing to delays on the voyage the new Viceroy would be a day late in arriving. 'My luck has clean run out,' he said, and he might have said it with still greater truth and on broader grounds when, after a series of untoward circumstances for which neither was wholly responsible had combined to mar the cordiality of the short meeting between the outgoing and incoming Viceroys, he embarked for England and left behind him an India in far more severe travail than Lord Minto could ever have gathered from that Memorandum.

CHAPTER XVIII

INDIA BETWEEN 1905 AND 1914

With Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty the autocratic system of government, of which it had been the supreme embodiment, came to an almost immediate end. For henceforth Indian public opinion as expressed through the Western-educated classes obtained a hearing which had hitherto been denied to it. It was, in fact, beginning to make itself heard in unprecedented tones. For him the one burning question when he sailed for England was still his fight with Kitchener over the higher administration of the Army. But he was leaving a very grave one behind him, though he would not have admitted it and was perhaps almost unconscious of it, in his ill-starred measure for the partition of Bengal. For coming at the moment when the defeat inflicted by Japan on a great European power which Englishmen themselves had long regarded as Great Britain's one formidable rival in Asia, was quickening with a sudden thrill of racial pride the new-born sense of nationhood expressed in the Indian Nationalist Movement, the Partition provoked the first great explosion of Indian revolt against his autocratic methods of government. Curzon had professedly conceived the Partition as a mere measure of administrative efficiency, to ease the machinery of government and administration in a huge overgrown province of over 70,000,000 inhabitants. It created, however, in Eastern Bengal a new province in which Mohammedans were to be in a large majority and enjoy a preponderating influence over the Hindus. There was not only an explosion of religious passion throughout Bengal, but Calcutta, having long prided herself on being in the van of intellectual and political progress, especially resented the measure as a blow deliberately dealt at its primacy, in punishment for the conspicuous part played by its political leaders in the Congress Movement which was Curzon's *bête noire*. Opposition ran to

the most turbulent forms of popular agitation, though not till two years later to secret conspiracies and murders.

Curzon had been deaf to the first mutterings of the storm, but he was gone, and soon afterwards there was a change of government in England and John Morley went to the India Office. All this made for appeasement, but the transformation scene effected by the visit of the Prince and Princess was none the less almost miraculous – the miracle of the King's Touch on a huge scale – and nowhere more miraculous than in Calcutta itself. The very same crowds which had rent the air with curses on the British *raj* and had flocked to the great temple of Kali to take before 'the Mother' the vow of unyielding resistance to the insult offered her in the partition of a province specially devoted to her cult, pressed with an equal frenzy to catch a glimpse of the Royal couple and to acclaim them with cheers and blessings and strew flowers before them wherever they passed. So deeply could Indians still be moved by their ancient sense of reverence for kingship that after the Royal reception in the Meidan thousands who had been too far off to see anything of it rushed forward to worship the empty seats which the Royalties had hallowed and to fight for the smallest mementoes of a ceremony which their enthusiasm invested with something of the character of a religious rite.

For the moment the bitterness of the Partition was entirely forgotten, but only for the moment. I had to return to England even before the Royal visit was over, and as soon as the spell of the Royal presence had passed away and Morley, treating the Partition as a *chose jugée*, declined to entertain the renewed demands for its revision, the storm broke out afresh and with renewed fury, and in spite of all the concessions to Indian opinion ultimately embodied in the Morley-Minto reforms, a formidable epidemic of political crime to which not only the lives of Englishmen but also of loyal Indians in the service of the State were ruthlessly sacrificed, spread from Bengal over many parts of India in a widespread

upheaval of religious and political passions. Few statesmen have been placed in a more trying position than was Morley during his tenure of the India Office, for his doctrinaire Liberalism had constantly to yield to the stern facts of the situation which Curzon had bequeathed to Minto in India. As Secretary for Ireland he had set his face resolutely against coercion, and now he was driven by a succession of appalling outrages to strengthen the Viceroy's hands by sanctioning a series of measures which many Indians at any rate denounced as rank coercion. In the constitutional reforms which he embodied in the Indian Councils Act of 1908 he had, on the other hand, to fight, not indeed the Viceroy, though Lord Minto by no means always saw eye to eye with him, but practically the whole of European public opinion in India, and especially in the great public services for whose splendid qualities he had an immense admiration. 'I am hitting them hard,' he said to me, 'and what is hardest of all, I know that with their fine sense of official discipline they have not a chance of hitting back.' Few things jarred as much on his democratic principles as the adoption of sectarian, or communal, representation on the new Indian Councils in deference to Mohammedan representations, and at the same time nothing provoked him to a more emphatic protest than the suggestion that he was importing parliamentary institutions into India. I had made his acquaintance years ago when he was Editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, and was kind enough to accept occasional contributions from my still very amateurish pen. I saw him very frequently whilst he was at Whitehall, and he used sometimes to walk over and have lunch with me in my rooms in Queen Anne's Mansions ; and though he was reputed to be impatient of contradiction, I have never found amongst the public men I have known of his standing and authority anyone so willing to listen and so tolerant of even serious divergencies of opinion. I was astonished sometimes at the warmth of the admiration he expressed, not only on one or two public occasions but in private con-

versation, for the great qualities that Lord Curzon had displayed as Viceroy. 'Whenever I want to *know* something about Indian administration, it is always to his minutes and despatches that I have to turn. The man's knowledge and industry and thoroughness were unrivalled. The pity is that his political judgment was that of a Tory and a Jingo.' And once he told me he had always regretted that Curzon had resigned the Viceroyalty before he himself went into the India Office. 'It would have been tremendously interesting to work with him, and I believe we might have pulled together. Mind you, I would have supported him over the Army question against Kitchener. As to the Bengal Partition, I think I might have steered him off the rocks.' It would indeed have been a most interesting experiment, but I cannot imagine how the clash could have been averted between two men, one of whom had essentially the Tory and the other the Liberal mind, and who were both by temperament thorough autocrats. Morley ruled his Council at the India Office with a very strong hand, and all the greater credit was, I thought, due to him when, on the retirement of Sir W. Lee-Warner, a member of his Council whom he could never browbeat, he obtained for him a G.C.S.I., which was in such cases quite an exceptional, if not an unprecedented, distinction. I congratulated Morley on that generous gesture. 'Not at all,' he replied, and after having referred in the warmest terms to Lee-Warner's great ability and high character, he added in his best whimsical vein: 'and if anybody deserves a G.C.S.I. it's surely a man who has been for four years a thorn in the flesh to the Secretary of State for India.' Kitchener, on the other hand, spoilt his chance of succeeding Lord Minto as Viceroy by a clumsy attempt to disarm Morley's opposition to his appointment. As Commander-in-Chief and Member of Council during Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty, he had signed the Government of India despatch recommending the Partition of Bengal. When he sought to whittle down his share of responsibility for that measure and assured Morley that in any case he held – as Morley was

known to do – that in matters of high policy the Viceroy was merely the agent of the British Government speaking through the Secretary of State, he showed himself a bad judge of character. Morley had at first opposed his appointment chiefly because he disapproved on principle of the appointment of a soldier to the Viceroyalty, but his opposition now hardened into personal distrust of the man who had tried to 'get round' him. Remembering how Kitchener had been brought to India by Curzon and had then turned and fought him, 'Some Indians,' he remarked grimly, 'think it, I am told, good luck to have a King Cobra nesting in their roof. I do not hold with that view. At any rate, I am not going to have one put into the roof of my bungalow.' And he threatened to resign if Kitchener got the appointment, for which he recommended Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, who went out in due course as Viceroy in succession to Lord Minto.

The keen interest I had begun to take in Indian affairs, but chiefly from the point of view of foreign policy, during Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty, was greatly quickened and broadened by my intimate relations with Morley during the years he was at the India Office. When in 1908 the crisis occurred in the affairs of *The Times* which enabled Lord Northcliffe to secure a controlling influence at Printing House Square, he pledged himself not to interfere in any way with the editorial conduct of the paper, but that was a pledge which a man of his temperament found it quite impossible to keep for long, and my relations with him which at first had been quite cordial grew increasingly difficult. In deference very largely to the wishes of old colleagues, I avoided a rupture by spending more and more of my time on special missions abroad, and for preference in India. In 1910 I wrote an unusually long series of articles for *The Times*, republished in an enlarged form under the title of *Indian Unrest*, which attracted a good deal of attention at the time, and Morley allowed me to dedicate the volume to him, though I had been by no means always uncritical of his Indian policy. Again, in 1911, I paid

another and still longer visit to India, and as I had been deeply interested by the part which a Hindu revival had played in the growth of *Indian Unrest*, I travelled this time through many of the remote parts of Central and Southern India, the strongholds still of ancient Brahmanism, never or only for a brief period brought under subjection to Islam. There I realized as I had never done before the rigidity of the caste system, which on the one hand has preserved the social structure of India from violent disruption throughout the vicissitudes of long ages of internal strife and foreign invasion, but on the other hand constitutes the most formidable obstacle to all modern forms of progress deriving from Western civilization. But of the simple faith of the Hindu in the gods whom he specially delights to worship, I never had more moving evidence than when on a journey up to the sources of the Ganges, where, on the edge of the everlasting snows, Hinduism is enshrined in the remote temples of Badrinath and Kedrinath, I met large parties of pilgrims from the tropical plains, returning half starved and half frozen in their scanty cotton clothes, but cheerful withal and content, counting for little the untold hardships of their pious errand against the joy of its fulfilment. Nor did they mourn for those whom they had lost on the way, for they had surely won through death on the pilgrim's road an indefeasible title to rebirth on some higher plane of existence. Far heavier, I may add, since I was travelling with Colonel (now Sir C. Manifold) on a tour of medical inspection, would have been the toll taken of them had not a paternal Government provided occasional rest-houses and professional help for those who fell sick on the way.

I stayed also for some time at Simla with Lord Hardinge, who was a very old friend. He was then absorbed in the preparations for the forthcoming visit of the King and Queen, the first visit paid to India by reigning sovereigns of the British Empire. Over and above the arrangements for the Imperial Durbar to be held in Delhi in celebration of King George's recent accession to the Throne, the Viceroy was

engaged in drafting the historic despatch from the Government of India recommending the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi and a territorial readjustment of the grievous question of the Bengal Partition, as the most striking measures of policy to be embodied in the King Emperor's proclamation to the princes and peoples of his Indian Empire. He took me into his confidence, as he had long been accustomed to do, and entrusted me with a State secret so carefully guarded and so successfully kept up to the very day when the solemn announcement was made that Lord Hardinge's critics afterwards condemned such secrecy as a violation of the constitutional rights of Parliament to control the action of the Government of India in all grave matters of policy. Yet secrecy was essential in a matter that directly involved the exercise of the King's supreme authority as Emperor of India. But had some information been confidentially imparted at least to the retired Viceroys whilst the King was on his way out instead of on the very eve of the Durbar, it might perhaps have taken some of the sting out of the pungent criticism in which none indulged afterwards more fully than Lord Curzon. He, at any rate, as I once ventured to remind him, had not always been so convinced an opponent of the removal of the seat of Indian Government from Calcutta, for during the worst period of political crime in Bengal in 1909 he had himself told me that the Viceroy would have some day to seek a new capital in a less 'mephitic atmosphere,' adding with some bitterness that 'doubtless none would have the courage to do it.' I left India and returned to London just before the Durbar, and had the satisfaction on the eve of my retirement from *The Times* of securing its support for a policy which, however hotly debated ever since, and in the matter of the new Delhi seriously hampered and delayed in execution by the Great War, has on the whole been already, as I from the first believed it would be, to a great extent justified, and will be still more completely vindicated in the future. The impression made at the time in India itself by the King Emperor's proclamation was im-

mense, for it was just the dramatic manifestation of sovereign power which Indian tradition associates with kingship. Popular enthusiasm at Delhi, and afterwards at Calcutta, transcended even all that I had myself witnessed during the Royal visit in 1905, and reached at times the rapture of semi-divine worship. That in a frenzy of political passion so venerable a tradition should have been thrown to the winds ten years later, during the Prince of Wales' visit to India affords, perhaps, more than anything else a measure of the destructive forces which were let loose in India in the aftermath of the Great War.

The first waves of serious unrest which followed Curzon's resignation seemed to have died down when in the summer of 1912 I was appointed a member of the Royal Commission which the Government was sending out to inquire into and report upon the Indian Public Services. The invitation came to me from Lord Crewe, who was then at the India Office, and it was strongly endorsed by his predecessor, Lord Morley, to whose recommendation I was also mainly indebted for the Knighthood which the King had been graciously pleased to confer upon me on New Year's Day. The main purpose of the Commission was to follow up the Morley-Minto reforms by enlarging the field for the employment of Indians and removing or mitigating the anomalies of a system which divided up the Public Services, often on very arbitrary lines, into a superior branch known as 'Imperial' and in practice very largely reserved for Europeans, and an inferior service called 'Provincial' to which were relegated the majority of Indians. I scarcely needed the friendly pressure of the Secretary of State and of Mr. Montagu, who was then Parliamentary Under Secretary, to induce me to accept, for having left *The Times* I was a free agent, and I had become keenly interested in India, and especially in the great problem of Western education with which the qualification of Indians for the Public Services was intimately connected. I had dealt with it at some length in my *Indian Unrest*, and nothing had attracted more attention amongst educated and thoughtful Indians.

I went out some weeks before the other members of the Commission to spend a little time with Lord Hardinge, and having accompanied him on the last part of his autumn tour to Bikaner and Bhopal, I was on my way to join my colleagues at Madras where we were to hold our first sittings, when I received in Bombay the shocking news of the attempt on the Viceroy's life whilst he was making his State entry into the new capital on the first anniversary of the Imperial Durbar. From one of the balconies of the Chandni Chauk, the chief thoroughfare of the native city, a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge, who was riding with Lady Hardinge on a State elephant, in accordance with Indian usage, on his way to the Fort where he was to have delivered a message of greeting to the people of India recalling the memorable results of the Royal visit. The news came to me in a telegram from Lady Hardinge, who asked me if I could possibly spare the time to return for a couple of days to Delhi. When I arrived at midnight on the following day, I found that the Viceroy had been very severely wounded, and was still in a critical condition. Lady Hardinge, who had been waiting up for me, was wonderfully calm and composed, and gave me a vivid account of the outrage, but spoke almost as in a trance, and as if she had abstracted her own personality from the dramatic story she was relating. She had indeed escaped without any apparent hurt, but the shock she had sustained must have hastened her very premature death two years later. Lord Hardinge had already earned the widespread confidence of Indians by his undisguised sympathy with all their legitimate aspirations, and with the hardships of Indians in South Africa, and Lady Hardinge's School of Medicine for Indian Women stands now at Delhi as an enduring monument, not only of the keen interest which she took in the cause of Indian womanhood and in everything that could tend to its advancement, but of the affection she had won by a rare charm of manner that was, with her, merely the outward reflection of a gentle and finely-tempered nature. The outrage sent a genuine thrill of horror

through the whole of India which hushed even the extremists, and also a real fear lest it should shatter the political hopes which the moderate parties had been encouraged to look for a further fulfilment during Lord Hardinge's Viceroyalty. All the more grateful was the response elicited by the assurance which Lord Hardinge hastened to convey from his sick-bed that what had happened could and would in no way diminish his affection and devotion to the people of India or modify the policy of good-will and progress for which he stood. Neither he nor India ever forgot that assurance.

The work of the Commission involved two prolonged tours through India and the holding of exhaustive inquiries in all the major provincial capitals during the winters 1912–13 and 1913–14, and the best part of another year's work in the hearing of evidence at home and the final drafting of the Report. The Report itself marked a long step forwards towards a much larger participation for Indians in the administration of their country, but for reasons of political expediency which I have always regretted, the Great War was allowed to delay its publication for over two years, and by the time it was published it failed entirely to satisfy Indian public opinion, which had been wrought up to much larger expectations by Mr. Asquith's promise of 'a new angle of vision' in Indian affairs as the reward of India's magnificent display of loyalty on the first outbreak of hostilities. When the increasingly heavy preoccupations of the War delayed the fulfilment of that promise, Indian impatience translated itself into renewed political agitation which far outran any demands that a Royal Commission appointed under very different conditions could possibly satisfy. Thus the practical results of our three years' labour proved in many ways extremely disappointing. But personally I have never had reason to regret the time I devoted to it. Lord Islington was our Chairman, and faithfully reflected the spirit of judicious compromise which is one of the best characteristic features of British statesmanship,

and our secretary was Mr. (afterwards Sir) Montagu Butler, and now Governor of the Central Provinces, whose industry and expert knowledge of Service conditions matched his resourcefulness in the adjustment of conflicting views. The colleagues with whom I was brought into daily contact were all men of ability and distinction, representing different schools of thought – Mr. Herbert Fisher; Mr. Ramsay Macdonald; Lord Ronaldshay, who was afterwards Governor of Bengal and one of the most successful and broad-minded administrators of recent times; the two members who represented more particularly the great Indian Civil Service, Sir Murray Hammick, an old friend who had had a long experience of Southern India and had once acted as Governor of Madras; and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Frank Sly, who became Governor of the Central Provinces; Sir Theodore Morrison, whose intimate acquaintance with Mohammedan sentiment as a former Principal of the Anglo-Mohammedan College (now the Mohammedan University) of Aligurh, was no less valuable than that of Mr. Justice Abdul Rahim in setting forth the special difficulties and special claims of the Indian Mohammedan community; and last and not least, Mr. G. K. Gokhale, who amongst all the Indians I have known seemed to me to combine the finest qualities of the Eastern civilization from which he sprang and of the Western civilization of which he had assimilated the best elements.

I already knew and admired him as the courageous founder of the Society of the Servants of India for the promotion of the high ideals of social service to which he devoted a life of strenuous endeavour and ascetic self-denial. If he was an ardent Indian patriot who claimed the release of his country from the leading strings of bureaucratic government, none acknowledged more fully and gratefully all that India owed to the fine example of integrity and intelligence and industry which the European members of the public service had set before his people, and he never hesitated to impress upon the

Western-educated youth of India that they must not only acquire the knowledge which British rule had opened up to them in modern schools and colleges, but above all emulate the qualities of British character to which Britain owed her freedom and her greatness. He was not only a master of the English language and an admirable speaker, but he had the gift of accurate and lucid statement and of logical reasoning which the ablest Indians often lack; and though Curzon was apt to regard his political independence as tainted with sedition, he was almost the only Indian whom that masterful Viceroy never ventured to treat as a negligible quantity in Council. In the intimacy which grew up between us during the three years we worked together on the Royal Commission, I learnt to entertain a deep and sincere affection for a man who could always understand the Englishman's point of view, even when he could least share it, and knew at the same time how to interpret with firmness and courtesy the very different and often antagonistic standpoint of the Indian. To him I owe a clearer insight than I had ever gained before into the rational and legitimate political aspirations of his fellow-countrymen, deriving straight from the Western education we have given them, and to him also a deeper understanding of the social and religious system of Hinduism in which he had been brought up as a high-caste Chitpawan Brahman. For if he had learnt to measure and deplore its shortcomings in the light of all the best that the West could teach him, he had too much self-respect to depreciate lightly the ancient civilization in which India had lived and moved and had her being from the very dawn of history.

Those three years were also for me years of education in my knowledge not only of India, but of the huge and complicated machinery of government and administration by which British rule was carried on by little more than a mere handful of Europeans with the help of an immense staff of Indians holding for the most part very subordinate positions.

My admiration remained undiminished for the great work done by England in India, which could, indeed, never have been done without the high standards of conduct that had always prevailed amongst the members of the great public services. But I learnt also to realize what were, as must be with all human institutions, their weak points. The legitimate pride in the work done tended to breed the conviction that Englishmen were alone qualified to do it, and not only knew far better than the Indians could how it was to be done, but were also the sole judges of what was to be done for the good of India. The excessive self-confidence which is common to all great bureaucracies all the world over was intensified by the Englishman's firm belief in his racial superiority. It showed itself chiefly in the attitude of European witnesses towards Indian claims to a larger share in the public services, but there was something of the same intolerance in the attitude of witnesses from the Indian Civil Service, that has always deservedly ranked as the premier service in India, towards members of the other public services, also mainly and not less carefully recruited in Europe. Some of the highest posts in other services had been hitherto usually reserved for members of the Indian Civil Service, and when those services tendered evidence to show that they should and could be equally well filled by promotion from their ranks, there was a note of arrogance in the opposition raised by the I.C.S., though the question at issue concerned merely men of their own race, which lent, to say the least, some verisimilitude to the analogous grievances of the Indian members of the Provincial services when they contended that the slur of inferiority had been arbitrarily cast upon them in order to gratify the Englishman's sense of racial superiority. This is not the place or the occasion to labour these points, but it was the experience I gained on the Commission that gradually modified the unquestioning confidence I had formerly shared in the impeccability of the old system and tended to convert me to the general spirit, if not to all the actual details of the reforms

introduced by, and as a consequence of, the Government of India Act of 1919, to meet the vastly changed conditions that had arisen in India, and indeed all the world over, out of the Great War.

CHAPTER XIX

INDIA DURING AND AFTER THE GREAT WAR

THE first of my visits to India during the War was at the beginning of 1915, and I went out chiefly to discuss with our two Indian colleagues on the Public Services Commission a few of the final recommendations on which complete agreement had not been reached before we adjourned over the summer. To my deep regret Gokhale died rather suddenly and very prematurely just before we were to meet at Delhi. It was a great misfortune for India, who was badly to need in coming years his wise and moderating counsels, and no less for the Commission, as I believe that if he had lived the majority might have gone further to meet his views and there might have been a unanimous report, whereas after the death of his only Indian colleague, Mr. (now Sir) Abdul Rahim grew altogether more uncompromising and insisted upon drawing up a minority report of his own which dissented considerably from that of the majority. Gokhale spent his failing strength in fighting the spirit of faction which was already impelling the Indian extremists to speculate on England's necessities. But the great outburst of enthusiasm with which India had at once responded to the call of the Empire had not yet slackened. Lord Hardinge had shown great courage not only in depleting India of most of its British garrison and of all its reserves of war material, but in pleading successfully that the large Indian forces sent to the Western Front should be given the opportunity of standing shoulder to shoulder in the fighting line with their British comrades in arms and not merely be used, as Indian cavillers foretold, to act as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the white man. India was proud to know that her soldiers were filling not unworthily and in circumstances of peculiar hardship for them some of the terrible gaps in the thin red line during those crucial winter

months, and an added touch of human sympathy went out to Lord Hardinge, when only a few months after his wife's death, his eldest son died of wounds received in France. In response to his earnest appeals from him the Legislative Council was ready to vote all the emergency measures and war contributions to the Imperial exchequer he asked for, and even the Indian National Congress had followed the lead given to it by Sir Satyendra (now Lord) Sinha in postponing all political controversies to the more urgent duty of winning the War.

Lord Hardinge kindly invited me to accompany him on his official visit to Basra and the Anglo-Indian Front in the early part of the Mesopotamian campaign when no one yet foresaw the obstinate resistance which our armies afterwards encountered and the serious reverses inflicted upon them a year later before they fought their way through to Bagdad. But before I returned to England the Viceroy had heard with great misgivings of our attempt and failure to force the Straits by a naval attack, for knowing the Dardanelles of old when he had been a Secretary of the Embassy in Constantinople, he foresaw some of the consequences and the reaction they would have on the situation in Mesopotamia. Before I returned to India again at the beginning of 1916 Mesopotamia was casting a dark shadow on the last months of his Viceroyalty. One of the grave difficulties with which he was confronted was the question of military commands in the field, on which he sometimes doubted the judgment of the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Beauchamp Duff – and, as the event proved, with very good reason. In the exercise of his supreme authority the Viceroy might, of course, in these as in all other matters, have over-ridden the Commander-in-Chief. But there were precedents in the history of India, with which, as the grandson of the first Lord Hardinge, he was especially familiar, which showed the danger of a clash between a civilian Viceroy and his responsible military adviser, and the danger could never be greater than at a very grave period in a war of such magnitude as that in which the whole

Empire was then engaged. In another matter also he was singularly unfortunate, for some time before he left India he had been sufficiently impressed by the complaints already rife against army administration in Mesopotamia, and especially on the medical side, that he had at one moment decided to send Lord Chelmsford, then still serving with his own territorial battalion in India, to carry out an independent inquiry on the spot. I was staying at Viceregal Lodge when Lord Chelmsford came to receive his final instructions from the Viceroy. At that very moment arrived a telegram from London offering Lord Chelmsford the succession to the Viceroyalty which Lord Hardinge was about to vacate. There was no one else to whom Lord Hardinge felt he could entrust the mission for which he had picked out Lord Chelmsford, and so the matter remained in abeyance until Lord Hardinge left shortly afterwards for England, and he was made eventually to bear a heavier share of blame than he might otherwise have incurred in the findings of the Mesopotamian Commission in London. This was another instance of the unfortunate results which have attended the prolongation of the Viceroy's customary term of office. Had it not been extended in Lord Curzon's case at his own instance, he would have retired before he was defeated by Lord Kitchener over the question of army administration and before the violent agitation provoked by the Partition of Bengal cast very grave doubts on the wisdom of his Indian statesmanship. Lord Hardinge merely stayed on for six months after the completion of his five years in India because the Cabinet did not wish to make a change during a particularly difficult period of the War, but had he not stayed on his Indian record would have escaped the painful criticisms provoked by the events of those last six months culminating, though only after he had left India, in the surrender of Kut.

My second and longer stay in India during the War – over eighteen months from January, 1916, to August, 1917 – arose out of an action for libel brought against me by the Mahratta

leader, Bal Gangadar Tilak, to whose activities I had traced back in *Indian Unrest* the first incitements to murder as a legitimate weapon of political warfare. To me personally it was a most vexatious episode, and the extremists knew how to exploit it so effectively for purposes of political propaganda that it grew into a matter of public importance in India. Tilak was one of the most remarkable personalities, and, as Gokhale once said to me, perhaps the most sinister, in the strong reaction against Western influence that set in towards the close of the nineteenth century. A Mahratta by race and a Chitpawan Brahman by caste, a native of Poona which had been the stronghold of Brahmanical power, political as well as religious, when at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Mahrattas held the moribund Moghul Empire in their grip until the British power came in to shatter their dreams of Indian dominion, he had first come prominently before the public as far back as 1882 by organizing and heading, as the champion of extreme Hindu orthodoxy, a violent campaign against a bill brought in by Lord Lansdowne for raising the age of consent in order to mitigate the social evils arising out of the time-honoured Hindu custom of infant marriages. It passed into law, but the opposition he had aroused against it was so widespread and deep that since then Government has always shrunk from any legislation that might be represented as impinging upon the religious domain. Tilak's next move was a frontal attack on the whole school of Indian social reformers, who under the influence of Western education had begun to preach the urgency of reconciling as far as possible Hindu beliefs and customs with the spirit of modern civilization. Not a few stood their ground manfully, but he carried with him not only many of his fellow Brahmins but a large part of the masses in the Mahratta Deccan. By eloquent appeals to their ancient religion and to their racial patriotism he roused their passions against the British oppressors of India, whose rule he boldly assimilated to the old and hateful Mohammedan domination, which Sivaji, the great hero of

Mahratta history, had been the first to challenge. The drastic and not always very wise measures adopted by the authorities of the Bombay Presidency for dealing with the bubonic plague when it first invaded India in 1895 gave him a welcome opportunity for grafting an intense distrust and hatred of Government on to the terror created by the new pestilence in the minds of an intensely superstitious and emotional people. He knew English well, and some of his earlier philosophic writings had attracted the attention of distinguished Orientalists in Europe, and amongst others, of Max Müller. But it was his own rugged Mahratta tongue that he handled with consummate skill, whether in speeches abounding with the sacred imagery of Hinduism, or in the widely-read columns of his vernacular newspaper, the *Kesari*. He defended murder, at least in theory, by eloquent appeals to history, as a weapon for destroying oppression, and on the day of Queen Victoria's second Jubilee two Englishmen, one of them Mr. Rand, the officer in charge of plague administration, were murdered just outside Poona on their way back from a reception at Ganeshkind, the summer residence of the Governor of Bombay, by a young Chitpawan Brâhman who, as he admitted, had been a great reader of the Tilak press. Tilak, against whom there was no evidence to sustain a charge of direct complicity, was arrested, tried and convicted of having stirred up sedition in a series of articles published a short time before the outrage. Some years elapsed after his release before he fully resumed his old activities, but with the Partition of Bengal and the emergence of a new school of Indian extremism he came once more to the front as the apostle of a national and religious revolt against alien rule. When the first bomb outrage in India took place at Muzaffarpur on April 30, 1908, in which two inoffensive English ladies were killed instead of the British magistrate for whom the bomb had been intended, Tilak's organ, whilst perfunctorily deploring an act of misguided patriotism, hailed nevertheless the advent of the bomb as a charm or 'amulet' of deliverance which would be for the good

of India. For those articles he was once more put on his trial, and after an Indian judge of the High Court of Bombay who presided had described them in his summing up as 'seething with sedition,' 'preaching violence,' 'speaking of murder with approval,' and condoning 'the cowardly and atrocious act of committing murder with bombs'– he was found guilty and sentenced this time to eight years' imprisonment, subsequently commuted into internment at Mandalay.

In preparing my book on *Indian Unrest* I had made a careful study of Tilak's career, and, anticipating by some years the Report of the official Committee of Inquiry into Indian Sedition (1917), I ascribed to him more than to any other individual the moral responsibility for the outbreak of violence and murder which had recently spread over a large part of India, and I pointed out that even since, as well as before, his internment at Mandalay it was the doctrines preached by him for many years past that had created the atmosphere which engenders murder. I adduced as the latest instance of the blind fanaticism which he had aroused the cold-blooded murder by another young Chitpawan Brahman of the Collector of Nasik, Mr. Jackson, at a farewell reception organized by the Municipal Council of that city to honour an Englishman noted above all for his gentle kindness and his keen sympathy with Indians. The murderer had himself admitted in the course of his trial that it was from reading the *Kesari* and other newspapers of the same complexion that he had been brought to think that 'by killing Sahibs (Englishmen) Indians would get justice.' Equally significant had been his admission that 'I never got injustice myself, nor did anyone I know. I now regret killing Mr. Jackson. I killed a good man causelessly.' It was on these and other analogous passages in my book that Tilak based his charge of libel against me.

Indian Unrest had been published in 1910 whilst he was interned at Mandalay. He had been released some time before the completion of his term of imprisonment and shortly before the Great War broke out. Not, however, until more than a

year afterwards did he take any steps to file his action against me. By that time six years had elapsed since the book was written, and the difficulty of procuring the legal evidence necessary to rebut the charge of libel had greatly increased. Government, who had been ready enough to place some of their records at my disposal when I was writing my book, intimated that they could not help me in my defence as, in view of the action that was pending, they were bound to observe complete neutrality. Indians who were ready to express their sympathy with me in private, and even to assist me in other ways, were frightened of being brought into the witness-box. Gokhale, who would, I am sure, have shown no such hesitation, was dead, and indeed not until after his death did Tilak take any legal action. When at last he did so he was able to command the financial as well as other support of his political friends and followers, who now included Mrs. Besant, just about to enter upon her new campaign of 'Home Rule for India.' I had relied not least on the judgment of the High Court and the language of the Indian judge at Tilak's trial in 1908, and also upon official summaries and translations of Tilak's articles and speeches. But these, I discovered, would not be regarded as legal evidence in a British Court of Law. I should have to produce in original the articles for which Tilak's responsibility could be proved, and with them translations into English made and sworn to by official translators. My first difficulty when I got to India was to procure those originals, as they had not been preserved in any Government files, and Tilak's active followers had already, it was clear, been busy removing them from other quarters, such as the Indian Bar Libraries where access to them might otherwise have been easy. It was only by the ingenuity and perseverance of Indian friends who took the same view as I did of Tilak that I succeeded in making a full collection of the originals covering a period of more than twenty years. As I had been advised that in every case the whole article and not merely extracts from it would have to be put in, it required

ultimately two large quarto volumes of five hundred closely-printed pages to cover all the evidence I eventually submitted to the Court of King's Bench when, partly owing to war delays and partly to the sending out of a Special Commission to take evidence in the first place in Bombay, the case came up for trial in February, 1919 – more than three years after Tilak had filed his suit – before a special jury with Mr. Justice Darling on the Bench, Sir John Simon leading for Tilak and Sir Edward Carson for me. It lasted for seventeen days, of which three and a half were spent in Tilak's cross-examination by an acknowledged master of the art. Carson had much difficulty in wrestling with Indian names, which he rolled out, including the plaintiff's, quite undauntedly with his rich Irish brogue. But he had, in addition to his professional skill, an Irishman's coaxing way of drawing Tilak into the most damaging admissions. Tilak, nevertheless, seemed to stand the long ordeal with great composure and entirely to his own satisfaction. He often skated over very thin ice, but only once did he blunder badly and palpably. When he was cross-examined with regard to his campaign against the measures taken for fighting the bubonic plague in the Deccan, he swore to the truth of some of his most odious allegations, not only against the British Government at home and Lord Sandhurst, who was at that time Governor in Bombay, but against the British soldiers – 'demon soldiers,' he called them – who had been employed to guard the plague camps. When asked for evidence in support of these allegations, he swore he had found it in the Report of the Government's own Commission of Inquiry. When further asked to quote the passages of that Report on which he particularly relied, he professed himself unable to do so because he had not got a copy of the Report with him. My counsel forthwith produced a copy and the Court allowed him some little time to look through it and find the relevant passages. When he failed to do so, he was also allowed to take the Report away with him, his further cross-examination on the point being postponed till the

following day. Tilak had then to confess his inability to find anywhere in the Report a single iota of the evidence to the existence of which he had so confidently sworn. That was perhaps the most dramatic incident in the trial and the one that clearly produced the strongest impression on the jury and crystallized, so to say, the cumulative effects of the whole cross-examination. Sir John Simon dealt with me more gently in cross-examination than he had threatened to when he opened for Tilak, and after Mr. Justice Darling's summing up on the seventeenth day the jury speedily returned its verdict 'for the Defendant.' Judgment was immediately delivered with costs in my favour. It was, I confess, a moment of intense relief for me, for if I had seldom the slightest doubts that I should and must win my case, the preparation of my defence had taught me how many are the pitfalls to which the law of libel exposes even the writer who imagines himself to have been most careful to verify his facts. The costs in the case were enormous – about £27,000 altogether for both sides – but, though not included by Tilak in the action, *The Times* had from the first agreed to share the expenses of the defence as it had shared the modest profits of the book, and when I had won the case the Proprietors generously relieved me of all further liabilities, though they only recovered £12,000 from Tilak, as they were unwilling to prolong bitter political controversies in India by suing him in Bombay for the balance. Nothing could quite compensate me for more than three years' suspense and heavy work and constant preoccupation, and a long absence in India when I would ever so much rather have been in England during the War. But when I got back to Paris, where I was at that time attached to the British Delegation at the Peace Conference, none congratulated me more warmly on my victory than the Indian representatives, Sir Satyendra (now Lord) Sinha and the Maharajah of Bikaner, both old friends of mine; and Mr. Montagu, as Secretary of State for India, assured me I had rendered a great public service in fighting and exposing Tilak.

One thing I owe, however, to Tilak. It was that long stay in India that enabled me to observe the many different reactions of the Great War on the Indian mind. It brought the Indian masses for the first time into contact, however indirectly, with the West itself through the scores and ultimately hundreds of thousands of Indian soldiers who were sent to the European and other fronts. At first there was a great wave of enthusiasm and pride. But the War lasted too long and was conducted in fields and under conditions too remote for all but a very few Indians to follow its vicissitudes with any real understanding, and the long casualty lists gradually converted an unquestioning confidence of victory into widespread doubts as to the final issue of the War. The growing urgency of official appeals for more and more recruits and the intensive methods of recruitment adopted tended to create an impression that without the continuance of Indian help the Empire would be lost, and many of the returning Indians were not slow to strengthen that impression by the individual tales of derring-do which they retailed with the usual Oriental proneness to hyperbole for the benefit of gaping and admiring audiences in their own far-distant villages. Amongst the urban classes the more conservative and orthodox, to whose customs and beliefs Western civilization was still repugnant, saw the negation of its vaunted superiority in the horrors of a barbarous war between Western nations which was bringing it to shame and ruin. Those whom Western education had brought into its orbit and who derived their political aspirations from English history and literature began to clamour for the immediate application to India of the Allies' repeated declarations that the War was a war for freedom. For the extremists England's hour of danger meant the appointed hour for the downfall of the *raj*. I was in Lucknow at Christmas, 1916, when Tilak and Mrs. Besant, who now posed as his Egeria, were the moving spirits of the Indian National Congress, which had cast off all semblance of moderation and deemed the moment ripe for dictating its own

terms. The keynote was struck in a strange travesty of the Mutiny in a Presidential Address, which referred to it as the military rising of 1857 that put an end to India's long oppression under the old East India Company!

The storm was then already brewing which was to break over India when, after the War was over, India felt the full brunt of its economic reactions. For these far more than the whole tragedy of the War affected the life of the Indian masses. The war requirements of the British Empire had given a tremendous impetus to the industrialization of India and brought great accessions of wealth to the few, whether Indians or Europeans, who were in a position to profit by the sudden dislocation of trade and industry. But it meant for the vast majority of the population of India a cruel increase in the cost of all the necessaries of life, pressing upon none more heavily than on the small townsman. Thus, whilst the final victory was for most Englishmen a proof, however dearly purchased, of the tenacity and superiority of his own race, the fact that England had won made far less impression in India than the price that the poorest amongst them had to pay for it in the aggravation of their daily struggle for existence. Add to all this the demoralizing effect upon profoundly ignorant and superstitious peoples of a series of destructive visitations during the very last years of the War – not only one or two serious famines in some provinces and a recrudescence of the bubonic plague, but two appalling outbreaks of influenza which in the course of a few months attacked scores of millions and actually killed nearly twelve millions. As the victims were for the most part men and women between eighteen and thirty-five, the vitality of the whole country was lowered for years afterwards, whilst its moral equilibrium was profoundly shaken by so terrific a manifestation, as popular opinion held it to be, of the wrath of the gods and of the impotency or worse of an alien and impious Government. Shell-shock assumed many different and desperately grievous forms amongst our own people who had gone through the ordeal

of battle. Far removed as India was from the actual frightfulness of war, all these different circumstances contributed to create a scarcely less mysterious repercussion which culminated in the years of political and religious frenzy after the War.

That frenzy was reaching its climax when I again, and for the last time, visited India in the winter of 1920–21. Whilst Englishmen had fulfilled, as they believed very generously, the promises made to India during the War by the grant of the new Constitutional Charter embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919, she was brooding only on her discontents and seeking salvation in a very different direction. For she had fallen under the spell of Gandhi's extraordinary personality, the most striking and for a time the most forceful figure that had ever conjured up for her a vision of her ancient past since she had first come into contact with the West. He had the ascetic qualities of saintliness and a fervour of religious faith which are still chiefly needed to move the masses, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, and for once in the modern history of India he was able for a short time to rally the support of both Hindus and Mohammedans by associating the slogan of Swaraj, which appealed more particularly to the Hindus, with the Mohammedan fervour for the Caliphate Movement in favour of Turkey after the War, in the combined campaign against British rule and Western ascendancy, euphemistically described as a movement of Non-Co-operation with Government.

Educated in Bombay, he had studied afterwards in England and been called to the English Bar. But he had been slowly estranged from the West by the treatment which he had seen dealt out to Indians in South Africa, where he carried on a prolonged agitation to secure redress for the many grievances of his fellow-countrymen and first preached the doctrine of passive resistance. This weapon, coupled with the Hindu doctrine of *Ahimsa*, or non-violence, he employed again in India during the troublous period which immediately followed the end of the Great War. But in the state of neurasthenia

which then prevailed amongst the masses, the movement which he set on foot soon degenerated into violence and there were those amongst his followers who did not share his own scruples as to violence. Almost simultaneously with the sudden risings, first in Egypt and then in Mesopotamia, disturbances broke out in Northern and North-Western India which, though on a smaller scale, revived the memories of the Mutiny – horrible excesses on the one side, stern repression on the other, culminating in the tragedy of Amritzar. Englishmen themselves will probably always disagree in their appreciation of General Dyer's action in the Jallianwalla Bagh, but, for myself, when I visited the spot two years later and read General Dyer's own account of what had happened, I was driven to regard April 12, 1919, as a black day in the annals of British rule. General Dyer doubtless achieved his purpose, which was, he declared, to 'strike terror into the whole of the Punjaub.' But history will, I believe, none the less endorse the censure ultimately passed upon him by the British and Indian Governments, who concluded 'regretfully, but without possibility of doubt,' that the action taken by him had been 'in complete violation' of the principles that should rule the employment of military force in support of civil authority. Amongst Indians of all classes it aroused intense bitterness. Gandhi denounced it as 'Satanic,' and more than anything else it served to sweep a large part of India into the Non-Co-operation Movement which he preached against a Satanic Government and the Satanic civilization that stobd behind it. The tide of revolt against the West spread far and wide and was dangerously swelled when he threw his mantle also over the Mohammedan Caliphate Movement as an equally splendid demonstration of religious faith.

I was at Delhi on February 9, 1921, when the Duke of Connaught, who had been sent out to inaugurate the new Indian Legislatures created under the Government of India Act of 1919, delivered to them a Royal message which for the first time lent countenance to Indian dreams of Swaraj,

'within my Empire,' it is true, but with 'the widest scope and ample opportunity for progress to the liberty which my other Dominions enjoy.' It was a stately spectacle. The new Chamber of Princes assembled in the great Hall of Public Audience where the Moghul Emperors once sat on the Peacock throne, and the flash of jewels and blaze of costly robes lent splendour to the survival of medieval India in the feudatory Native States. In marked contrast with it was the modern India created by British rule and represented by the members of the Legislatures of British India, most of them in sober European attire, and almost all indebted to Western education for the position they had won. All races and creeds and classes were represented amongst them, except the one popular force that for the moment swayed the Indian masses. Gandhi was not there nor any of his followers, for he had proclaimed the new Legislatures to be as Satanic as the Government to which they owed their birth. But he was not far away. He was himself presiding over a great popular demonstration a few miles out of Delhi, and whilst the Duke of Connaught was passing through the almost deserted streets of the capital, the people of Delhi, Hindu and Mohammedan, had gone out in their thousands to hear the inspired Mahatma deliver his message calling upon India to strain her whole soul-force to throw off the Satanic yoke of an alien rule and an alien civilization.

Yet Gandhi had none of the fierce fanaticism or of the commanding presence which one is apt to associate with a great revolutionary leader. I saw him afterwards at Allahabad, a small frail figure and a drawn face with little to attract one except a gentle and rather pathetic smile and voice. I had more than an hour's talk with him, but I failed in all my attempts to bring him down to my own lower plane out of the world of visions in which he moved. He used the word Swaraj as if it were a spell that would in itself purge India of the degrading influences of the West and restore to her that peace which was hers, he declared with incredible disregard

for history, before alien domination divided and exploited her peoples. As to the form of government and administration which would then obtain in India, he would not go beyond a vague assurance that it would be based on the free will of the people expressed by manhood suffrage for which Indians were already ripe, if called upon to exercise it upon truly Indian lines. When I objected that caste, which was the bed-rock of Hindu social and religious life, was surely a tremendous obstacle to any real democracy, he admitted that the system would have to be restored to its pristine purity and redeemed from some of the abuses that had crept into it. But he upheld the four original castes as laid down in the Vedas, and even their hereditary character, though in practice some born in a lower caste might well rise by their own merits and secure the deference and respect of the highest castes, 'such as, for instance, if I may in all modesty quote my own unworthy case, the highest Brahmans spontaneously accord to me to-day, though I am by birth only of a lowly caste.' I tried to get on to more solid ground by pointing out that, whatever views one might hold as to his ultimate goal, the methods he was employing in trying to break up the existing schools and colleges and law-courts and to paralyse the machinery of administration was destructive rather than constructive, and that, confident as he might feel of substituting better things ultimately for those that he had destroyed, construction must always be a much slower process than destruction, and in the meantime infinite and perhaps irreparable harm would be done. 'No,' he rejoined – and I think I can convey his words pretty accurately, but not his curious smile as of boundless compassion for the incurable scepticism of one in outer darkness – 'no, I destroy nothing that I cannot at once replace. Let your law-courts with their cumbersome and ruinous procedure disappear, and India will set up her old *Panchayats*, in which justice will be dispensed in accordance with her own conscience. For your schools and colleges upon which lakhs of rupees have been wasted in bricks and mortar for the

erection of ponderous buildings that weigh as heavily upon our boys as the educational process by which you reduce their souls to slavery, we will give them simpler structures, open to God's air and light, and the learning of our forefathers that will make them free men once more.' Not that he would exclude all Western literature – Ruskin, for instance, he would always welcome with both hands – nor Western science so long as it was applied to spiritual and not to materialistic purposes, nor even English teachers, if they would become Indianized and were reborn of the spirit of India. Indeed, what he had looked for, and looked in vain for, in the rulers of India was 'a change of heart' by which they too might be reborn of the spirit of India. He hated no one, for that would be a negation of the great principle of *Ahimsa* on which he expatiated with immense earnestness.

When Lord Reading arrived in India he invited Gandhi to Simla and spent the best part of a week in close conversation with him. Than those meetings there can have been no more dramatic moment in the course of his Viceroyalty. On one side of the table at Viceregal Lodge, the stately representative of the Western power, and at the same time a typical representative of the Western twentieth century with its hard materialism and loss of religious faith, a man who had risen from the ranks by sheer industry and intellectual ability and forcefulness of character; trained successfully in the rough school of London city life and in the finer discipline of the legal profession to a brilliant Parliamentary career, Solicitor and Attorney-General, and a member of the British Cabinet before the War; Ambassador to the United States after America had come into the War, and business capacity rather than diplomatic experience was needed at Washington to co-ordinate the financial and industrial resources of the Associated Powers for the effective prosecution of the War, and last of all, Chief Justice of England; the first Jew to have been Viceroy of India; and on the other side of the table Gandhi just as I had seen him at Allahabad, scantily clad in the rough

homespun clothes which were to him the symbol of a religious and social and political creed that would have put the clock back to the primitive days of the ancient Vedas and shattered by the mere soul-force of a more spiritual India an alien *raj* and a racial supremacy which had been tried and found wanting. For a time the issue seemed to hang in the balance. For when immediately after their conversations Lord Reading took the grave responsibility of pressing for the Prince of Wales' promised visit to India to be carried out during the next winter, Gandhi proclaimed a boycott of the visit as a national demonstration of Indian protest against a 'Satanic Government' whom he charged with using the prestige of the Crown for the purposes of political propaganda in India. Gandhi doubtless never contemplated violence, which was a sin against his favourite Hindu doctrine of *Ahimsa*. But he aroused passions which were bound to lead to violence. Sanguinary riots took place in Bombay on the day of the Prince's landing in India and were only averted in other cities, and notably in Calcutta, by an overwhelming but necessary display of force. Happily the unfailing courage and good humour of the Prince himself speedily helped to redeem the royal visit from the failure which the Swaraj tactics were intended to produce.

That was the climax of the storm. And now five years later Gandhi is politically a spent force. Almost all of his followers have turned away from him and he has retired into a life of meditation in which he is doing 'Himalayan penance' for a backsliding people incapable as yet of exercising the 'soul-force' in which he puts his faith. The men of Angora, by abolishing the Caliphate, have themselves knocked the bottom out of a Caliphate movement inspired from the very first by hatred of the British *raj* rather than by love for Turkey. The brief period of Hindu-Moslem 'fraternization' failed even when Gandhi's influence was at its apogee to save the helpless Hindus of the Malabar coast from the ferocity of the Mohammedan Moplahs, recalling all the horrors of the early Moham-

medan invasions of India, until British troops arrived to restore order. In the fierce and widespread recrudescence of Hindu-Moslem feuds, Indians have learnt to realize once more that it is the British *raj* that divides them least and can alone maintain internal peace. Amongst the politically minded Indians there has been almost a flight from Swaraj; and the party that at last decided to enter the Assembly and the Councils after having for several years boycotted them, but entered them at first defiantly as the Swaraj party, is now considering the expediency of calling itself – by way of moderation – the Congress party! The new Indian Constitution which was launched in the heaviest storm experienced since the Mutiny has weathered it without any serious damage to the stability of the British *raj*; and there is once more at the helm a pilot who has restored confidence amongst Indians as well as Englishmen. For Lord Irwin possesses the qualities of temperament and character and the firm faith which Indians associate with the best of their British rulers in the past. But the world moves fast to-day, and even in the deep channels of India's ancient life the tide flows and ebbs with immensely greater force and rapidity than in the days when India, even as I first saw it a little over forty years ago, seemed to be almost entirely cut off from all outside influences save those that reached her through British agencies and the unchallenged power of the British *raj*.

CHAPTER XX

BERLIN IN THE EARLY DAYS OF WILLIAM II

THE most important years of my life were the twenty years during which my close connection with *The Times*, first as its correspondent for about five years in Berlin, and then as head of its Foreign Department at Printing House Square till I retired in 1912, gave me opportunities of informing and influencing public opinion on great issues of international policy at a very critical period of our history. The offer of the Berlin post was made to me through Moberly Bell, who had recently taken over the management of *The Times* in London and was anxious to expand its foreign service and raise it to a high level of general and sustained efficiency, instead of depending, as had hitherto been the habit, on rather spasmodic efforts, however brilliant, or on 'star' celebrities such as M. de Blowitz. I had first made Moberly Bell's acquaintance, which was to grow into warm friendship, shortly after the British occupation of Egypt, when he was, as he had been for twenty years already, *The Times* correspondent, and I, who had only made intermittent excursions into journalism, was acting as correspondent of the *Standard* in Cairo. Moberly Bell's proposal to me was warmly supported by Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, whose recent appointment to the Foreign Department of *The Times* had substantially enhanced the authority of the paper in the domain of foreign affairs, as he had acquired a European, and indeed more than European, reputation. When correspondent of *The Times* at St. Petersburg, he had made a name for himself by writing what was for a long time the standard book on Russia, and from Constantinople Lord Dufferin, when appointed Viceroy of India, had taken him with him to be his Private Secretary – a post of peculiar resp nsibility in the Indian public service. He was a remark-

able linguist, and his judgment and discretion won for him an exceptional degree of confidence from Continental sovereigns and their ministers, as well as from British statesmen, and the good will and friendship of King Edward VII, long before his accession to the throne. I had known him longer and more intimately than I had known Moberly Bell, and I was much attracted by the prospect of serving under a chief of his wide experience, whilst he and Moberly Bell both laid great stress on the importance of the Berlin post at that juncture, as the young Emperor William II was still an unknown quantity, and no one could predict how he would use the formidable power of the German Empire. To clinch the argument, as they knew what a rolling stone I had hitherto been, they assured me that, though Berlin would be my headquarters, I should have plenty of opportunities of travel on special missions, and I was promised an assistant whom I could train to be left in charge when I was away. With two such good friends at Printing House Square, I gladly accepted the offer, and before long my relations with the Editor, Mr. Buckle, whom I had never met until then, ripened also into mutual confidence and intimate friendship, whilst no one could possibly wish for more loyal comradeship and willing service than I found in the staff of *The Times* when I left Berlin to work in London as Foreign Editor.

I took up my residence in Berlin at the beginning of May, 1892, in a pleasant little apartment on the sunny side of Unter den Linden. I was no stranger to Germany, for I had been partly educated there before the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 in the neighbourhood of Frankfort-on-the-Main, when the feeling there was still more or less anti-Prussian. My tutor, a schoolmaster who had taught at one time in England, used to hold forth enthusiastically about everything English to a not unreceptive audience at a select *Stammtisch* consisting generally of the *Herr Bürgermeister*, the two *Herrn Pfarrer*, Catholic and Protestant, who managed to share the only church and held consecutive services undisturbed

by their denominational differences, the *Herr Doctor*, the *Herr Apotheker*, and one or two chemical experts at an *Anilin Fabrik* still in its infancy which afterwards developed into one of the greatest in Germany. A place was good-naturedly made for the *yunger Engländer* on high days and holidays, and I accustomed my ears there to idiomatic German a good deal more successfully than my palate to German beer. In the following year I had had a glimpse of the victorious armies in France and been impressed by their extreme efficiency and discipline, though my sympathies, especially during the later phases, were with the vanquished and not with the victors. I had often travelled in Germany since then and had associated a great deal with Germans in other countries, who were usually friendly and sometimes forgot even that I was English, as I spoke German as fluently as they did. If I had gradually realized that as a nation they had grown less *gemütlich* than formerly and that Bismarckian diplomacy could be often no less ruthless than tortuous, as I had seen it, for instance, in Bulgaria in Prince Alexander's time – I had lost little or nothing of my youthful liking for the people or of my admiration for their literature and music, as well as for their national qualities of industry and thoroughness.

Berlin itself, or at least all that was modern in it – and most of it was modern – did not attract me. Much of it was very commonplace and vulgar with its heavy and pretentious architecture and its inordinate love of florid ornamentation and cheap gilding. One got, however, uncommonly good music at the Opera and the Philharmonie; the theatres were interesting and often very good and I witnessed more Shakespeare plays, sometimes admirably done, than I had ever seen at home; and the Altes Museum provided a wonderfully representative collection of old masters of almost every school, systematically brought together by the great expert that Bode was. Except in the Grünwald and farther afield at Potsdam, the country round Berlin was very bare and

uninteresting, and besides the pretty Thiergarten there was little to tempt one out for a walk in Berlin itself. One soon grew tired of the uniformity and dead level of its streets. In the interminable Friedrichstrasse, for instance, one could from either end of it almost measure the curvature of the earth by the depression of the long straight line of lamps as they sank gradually to the far-off horizon. But the town was kept spotlessly clean and the municipal administration of the capital was altogether admirable, the city fathers having had an almost clean slate to work on after the Franco-Prussian War when Berlin had to be converted from a very primitive and almost provincial *Residenz-Stadt* into a great Imperial city. I soon got inured to an irksome multiplicity of police regulations which one was in constant danger of infringing, though it was extremely irritating to be summoned four times to attend at the police-office of my particular quarter and have to explain to uncomprehending ears that one might in given circumstances be prompted to do something by the most elementary instincts of human kindness. On one occasion I saw a small four- or five-year-old-boy knocked down by a *droschke* that drove hurriedly away. It was rather early in the morning, the street was unfrequented, there was no one abroad, and the poor little mite was so dazed that he could give no account of himself. So I picked him up and walked him along till I found a cab to take us to the police-office, where I handed him over to the public authority. It was apparently impossible to make that authority understand or believe that one had no sinister ulterior motive for befriending a helpless child, until on the fourth summons I rather lost my temper and threatened to report the whole matter to the British Embassy. Then I was left in peace. The efficiency of the police in keeping order and regulating the traffic was undeniable, though they were often extremely rough and even brutal, but I soon became aware that they did not consider it part of their duty to promote the moral cleanliness of the city. Vice of all kinds there is in all great

cities, but it seldom flaunts itself so aggressively as it did in Berlin, which was already emulating the Cities of the Plain without as yet the excuse of such scandalous examples of depravity as were afterwards furnished by men of the highest rank and position at Court and in the army during the most brilliant period of William II's reign.

In a capital as caste-ridden as Berlin then was, journalists had no social status. The sword was far mightier than the pen, and Anti-Semitism being then more than usually fashionable, the Press was in very bad odour, the majority of German journalists, and some of the ablest, being Jews. But to a few a certain tolerance was extended, as, for instance, to the representatives of an ultra Conservative paper like the *Kreuz-Zeitung* or of such a semi-official organ as the *Kölnische Zeitung*, and most English journalists were given the benefit of the doubt. I was even told, not always very tactfully, that I had received altogether privileged treatment, partly, as I afterwards gathered, because I entertained, though on a very modest scale, in my own little flat and not in a restaurant, and this was considered very *vornehm*; and, what was still more *vornehm*, I had my *grosse und kleine Entrées* at the British Embassy, then reputed to be very exclusive, though that merely meant that I was on friendly terms with the Ambassador, Sir Edward Malet, of whom I had already seen a good deal in the troublous days of Arabi Pasha in Cairo, and that he and his wife, Lady Ermintrude, a daughter of the Duke of Bedford, kept considerable state, and entertained with great punctilio all that, by birth or official rank, was held worthy to figure in the *Almanach de Gotha*.

Another favouring circumstance was that I found myself very soon invested with a nimbus of prestige and almost of mystery by the friendly relations which I had unexpectedly and almost accidentally established with Holstein, the *Eminence Grise* of the Wilhelmstrasse who, on an introduction from the British military attaché, Colonel Swaine, one of the few foreigners he ever saw, opened his door to me as he rarely

did even to Ambassadors. If he roughly slammed it in my face once or twice afterwards when he took exception to the views I expressed in *The Times*, he was always the first to hold out the olive branch after these explosions of temper, and I always cheerfully accepted it, as I knew there was no personal ill-feeling behind them. He told me at last that what had often exasperated him in me, as in other Englishmen too, was that though I spoke German like a German, I was so thoroughly English that I remained politely unmoved when he lectured me, and on other occasions when he wanted to be suave, I allowed him to read on my face 'your English proverb about fine words buttering no parsnips,' 'But,' he added, 'I will say this for you, that you never gave me away,' which, from him, was a real compliment. He had his faults and made many enemies, but the better I came to know the political world of Berlin, the more I respected him for the possession of sterling qualities that grew exceedingly rare during William II's reign. He was almost morbidly suspicious, and he could be a good hater, like Bismarck, with whom he had served a long and close apprenticeship. His methods were doubtless often unscrupulous and tortuous, but not more so than those of the court camarilla, with whom he was constantly at grips and of whom he knew too much not to distrust them intensely, and if he strove for power and clung to it tenaciously, it was not for its trappings, but because he believed himself to be the repository of the old traditions of German foreign policy in the best days of the great Chancellor, from whom he only broke away when he tried to found a dynasty by putting his son Herbert into the Foreign Office. In an atmosphere of gross adulation and servility, he preserved an independence of character and showed a contempt for stars and ribands and plumed helmets, which were proof against all blandishments from the highest quarters. 'Diogenes in his tub' could hardly have been a more unseemly anachronism in the Berlin of William II. I learnt much from him during our pleasant periods of intimacy, and, whether in the course

of our long conversations in his stuffy little room at the Foreign Office, where he sat, his enemies said, like a spider in his web, with a small side door opening straight into the Foreign Secretary's room, or on a Sunday tramp and a frugal meal together in a Grünwald restaurant, he would let himself go to me with surprising freedom about men and things in Berlin, from the 'All Highest' and his favourite courtiers downwards, as well as about what he was fond of calling the 'dessous des cartes' in European diplomacy. I was quite aware that he was not always a safe guide, but my intercourse with him was extremely helpful to me in my work, and I soon became so absorbed in the study of the new Germany, so unlike that of my youthful recollections, that I came to care very little about the social side of Berlin, except in so far as it helped me to interpret in *The Times* the immense transformation that was taking place in the life of the whole German nation.

What first struck me most was that in Berlin at any rate the former simplicity of German life had almost entirely passed away. The old Emperor William was no more, who slept till the end of his days on a camp bed, and Bismarck was gone from the Chancellor's Palace where, though he kept up no little state, he had stuck to his old porcelain pipe and many other homely habits of the mid-nineteenth century which were giving way to the more pretentious fashions of a new era of wealth and luxury. The old upper classes, once so frugal, and an entirely new middle class were being swept along on the crest of a great tidal wave of industrial and commercial prosperity. I made many acquaintances in Berlin but hardly any friends, and under a somewhat ponderous cordiality of manner and rather ostentatious forms of hospitality, arrogance and egotism even in the smallest things seemed to be the dominant note in all classes of society. One young fellow in the Foreign Office I specially remember who frequently invited himself to dine with me, and insisted on talking English, which he did very badly.

When one day I suggested that our conversation would flow more easily if we talked German, he burst out with a real *cri du coeur*: 'Aber, lieber Herr, wie werde ich dabei profitiren wenn wir Deutsch anstatt Englisch sprechen!' 'How then, my dear Sir, shall I profit?' And he cut up quite rough when I remarked that in England the people I knew did not dine out for profit. The word that sprang into unpleasantly common use with us during the Great War was from that moment coined in my mind. The Berliner usually had all the making of a 'profiteer.'

I still, however, believed that there were no vital questions of international policy likely to divide two countries between whom there seemed to be a much larger and more rational community of interests than between any other two great European Powers. There was already a somewhat active propaganda for the assertion of Germany's right to have colonies of her own, especially in Africa. But Bismarck had not hesitated to snub these *Colonialmenschen* and had told the Reichstag that he was not going to quarrel with England over 'a little bit of Africa.' And what were occasional outbursts against England for grudging Germany a small slice of the Dark Continent still waiting for development when compared with the persistent malevolence of France in Egypt or the menace of Russian expansion in Central Asia towards the frontiers of India? Had not Caprivi, the simple, straightforward soldier who had shouldered at the Emperor's bidding the heavy burden of Bismarck's inheritance, assured me in my first interview with him that it was his Imperial master's earnest desire and his own to maintain friendly relations with all countries, and not least with England, whose interests, like Germany's, lay in the peaceful conservation of a great position in the world and not in adventurous schemes of aggressive expansion? One simply could not distrust Caprivi.

But what of the young Emperor himself, who had already thrown the old pilot overboard nearly two years before I went

to Berlin and was steering Germany 'full steam ahead' on the 'new course' which was to lead her to 'high fortunes and unparalleled splendour'? What the 'new course' was actually to be he had not yet revealed and probably did not himself quite know. His was still, and remained, a very bewildering personality, which the general public, foreigners and Germans, scarcely tried to read until after the final catastrophe. His outrageous treatment of his mother, the Empress Frederick, as soon as the life was out of his father's body could not be forgotten, but there has been at least a formal reconciliation between them. He had inaugurated his reign with a fine democratic gesture when he convened an international Labour Conference in his capital; but was he not already displaying a very different temper in the growing frequency of flamboyant speeches threatening to 'smash' all who opposed the Royal will and first and foremost the German Social-Democrats whom he denounced as vulgar churls and godless enemies of the Fatherland? How sinister was to be the influence of the Eulenburgs was only suspected when the Emperor suddenly dismissed Caprivi with a brutality which wounded even that loyal soldier to the quick. But public anxiety was relieved when the next Chancellor was the Emperor's aged and much-respected kinsman Prince Holenlohe whose long experience of public affairs would, it was hoped, exercise a moderating influence on a somewhat headstrong young ruler. If Bismarck charged him with having betrayed German interests by cutting the old wires between Berlin and St. Petersburg, it was not for England to complain, and when in 1893 there was a moment of acute tension between England and France in Siam, one could hardly resent William II's anxiety to proffer his active support to us, though British Ministers found his unsolicited overtures more embarrassing than helpful so long as they could hope – as the event showed rightly – for a peaceful adjustment of their differences with the French.

There were, however, disquieting symptoms of the Emperor's intemperance of character which impressed me none the less

unfavourably because they were not connected with questions of foreign policy. Unsavoury as it is, I must recall the first great scandal which alarmed me by throwing a very unpleasant light on the Kaiser's whole mentality. The process for producing composite photographs by piecing parts of different photographs together and then photographing them afresh as an integral whole was then very little known, and Berlin society was thrown into great agitation by the circulation through the post of monstrously obscene photographs for which members of the recipient's families appeared actually to have posed. This came to the Emperor's ears and he was naturally and rightly furious. But when he was told that suspicion had fallen on Baron von Kotze, one of his own favourite chamberlains who then happened to be away on leave, he was at once prepared to believe that the man whom he knew so intimately and had hitherto so completely trusted could be and was guilty of a revolting offence, and instead of refusing to credit the charge except on the strongest possible evidence and giving him at least a hearing, he had him summoned back to Berlin where he was met at the station by a court official with orders to place him then and there under military arrest and convey him straight to prison; and there without any process of law he remained confined for several weeks until the Emperor had to admit his innocence and agree to his release, as evidence had in the meantime been produced which incriminated a personage standing very much nearer to the throne. But Kotze was not reinstated and no reparation was made to him. So he had to fight a series of duels in order to clear his honour as an officer, which, according to the Prussian military code, could not be otherwise vindicated. He had the satisfaction of killing his principal traducer, but even then a large section of Berlin society preferred still to believe in his guilt. It was in connection with this episode that writing privately to Mackenzie Wallace at Printing House Square I sounded my first note of warning as to the Emperor's extraordinary irresponsibility which,

should it ever manifest itself in great international issues, as it had in matters concerning his own household, might be a formidable menace to the peace of the world.

Yet the squalid Kotze episode created only a shortlived sensation and the official cue was to say as little about it as possible. In more bourgeois circles it was dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders as just another illustration, though a very disgusting one, of the seamy side of court flunkeydom and militarism, for which not the young Emperor but his surroundings were to be chiefly blamed. Even the Social-Democrats were tongue-tied. They constituted a very large proportion of the German electorate and their party was very prominent in the Reichstag, but some of their ablest leaders would admit to me in private that German militarism was too strong for them. I was standing one day talking to Bebel about Treitschke's University lectures which, besides breathing a bitter hatred of England in gross perversions of history, were a constant glorification of war, when a battalion of Prussian Guards – the Alexander Regiment – marched past us, and he said to me of his own accord, 'Look at those fellows! Ninety per cent Berliners and eighty per cent Social-Democrats! But if there was trouble they would shoot me or anyone down at the word of command from above,' and he pointed to the Royal Schloss. 'The whole nation,' he continued, 'is still drunk with military glory and there is nothing to be done until some great disaster has sobered it.'

It was not by Socialists or by the bourgeoisie that I heard the Emperor most freely discussed. It was by some of those who were in closest touch with him, and by none more unreservedly than by Kiderlen Wächter, who was at that time an Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office and in high favour, but fell later on into long disgrace from which he emerged only a short time before and during the Great War. I met him at lunch when he had just returned from attendance on the Emperor during one of his usual summer cruises in Norwegian waters. Asked whether it was true that *Majestät* had been

in a very bad temper and given everybody a very bad time, Kiderlen, who was rather flushed with wine, replied with a coarse laugh, 'Yes, there were days when he was beastly to most of us, but I could always smell the coming of the storm and managed to keep out of his way till lunch, when I would have some dirty (*zotige*) story to unload on him and that never failed to put him in good humour again, at least with me! Thus as time went on I got something more than an inkling of almost all the Kaiser's meaner characteristics which Herr Emil Ludwig exposed last year in his remarkable book, *Wilhelm der Zweite.* But the men who fed out of his hand had to pander to his weaknesses which they professed to regard as merely insignificant spots on a sun of incomparable splendour, and Bülow when a candidate for the Chancellorship wrote to Philip Eulenburg who was to pass the letter on to the Emperor that he was 'simply adorable' and 'the greatest of the Hohenzollerns since the Great Elector and Frederick the Great.'

So there grew upon me a profound distrust of the man, though I was told, and specially by all the foreigners who approached him, that he had when he liked a marvellous charm of manner, and I could myself quite well understand the impression made upon his people by his fine presence, in spite of the shrivelled arm he was always at pains to conceal, when he rode out in his splendid white uniform with the white plumes in his helmet flowing to the wind, looking for all the world like Lohengrin, or when in his mail-phaeton he drove furiously through the streets of the capital, curbing with one hand his pair of fiery chestnut horses. He was a born orator and even a fine preacher, for it was he who used to preach every Sunday to the crew of the *Hohenzollern* during his frequent cruises, and his fervent appeals to religion and to history, if somewhat rhetorical, always struck a lofty note. Did he not once speak of the Almighty as 'the ancient ally of my House'? I only dimly realized then that he was above all a consummate actor, for I was not as quick as

Sarah Bernhardt who, when I asked her how she had got on with him during her visit to Berlin where she had just given a series of performances at his special invitation, replied to me with a shrug of the shoulders, 'Mais admirablement, car ne sommes nous pas, lui et moi, tous deux cabotins?' Are not we both of us born play actors?

It was not, however, a mere distrust of the Emperor's character that grew on me steadily during those first years in Berlin, but, more slowly, a deep distrust of Germany's foreign policy, and not least in connection with Anglo-German relations, in spite of his continued professions of friendship for England. The German Foreign Office had no doubt some excuse for complaining of the dilatory fashion in which our own Foreign Office was apt to deal with the Colonial questions arising more and more frequently out of Germany's claims to 'a place in the sun,' but it was not without the knowledge and approval of the Emperor that both in the official correspondence and in the language used by the 'inspired' as well as the 'uninspired' newspapers there crept in a new note of distinct hostility and even menace when the independence of the Boer Republics of South Africa was proclaimed to be vital to the German Empire on grounds both of racial affinity and of political interests. My intimacy with Holstein, who controlled the Press Bureau of the Wilhelmstrasse, enabled me to gauge the value of official disclaimers of responsibility for violent newspaper articles only too well calculated to revive the Anti-British feeling which Bismarck himself in former times had deliberately sought to arouse in order to strengthen his hands at home against the influence of the Crown Princess Frederick, 'the Englishwoman' he hated, if and when her husband succeeded to the throne of Germany. I had even seen the machine actually at work, for amongst the junior members of the Foreign Office was a clever subordinate in the Press Bureau who was probably anxious to impress me with the importance of the work on which he was engaged. He had to prepare the cuttings

from the Press which, pasted on to gilt-edged foolscap, were sent in daily for submission to the Emperor. When he was showing me an assortment on a question of the day, I observed that they did not include an important article which I had read elsewhere, and he replied rather sententiously: 'My dear Sir, you do not seem to understand that such matters have to be laid before *Majestät* according to plan, and the article you mention might disturb the impression to be produced on the "All Highest" mind.' I was also sometimes shown the cuttings as they came back from the Palace with the marginal notes in the Emperor's blue pencil. They were more innocuous than those of which the State Archives published since the war have revealed such amazing specimens, but they already betrayed a singularly ill-balanced and rather coarse mind and in some cases an extraordinarily hasty temper. Another thing I learnt was that the newspapers reputed to be 'independent' were frequently used to put forward as *ballons d'essai* certain points of view which it was deemed premature to propound even semi-officially. I once could not help expressing my surprise that what seemed to me a very obscure provincial newspaper should contain anything worth laying before the Emperor. 'You may well feel surprised,' was the reply, 'but that is only the opening move in a rather complicated gambit, and if it is not successful, we have merely risked an insignificant pawn without having had to uncover the King's Knight!' In no other country was the Press, apart of course from notoriously irreconcilable opposition papers, so completely and carefully controlled, that, in regard to foreign affairs especially, it could only be likened to a powerful and well-attuned organ on which the Press Bureau, itself a recognized department of the Foreign Office, knew how to play with every variety of skilfully contrived effect, sometimes *piano*, rarely *pianissimo*, and more often pulling out all the stops in succession for an impressive *largo* rising to a resounding *forte* or violent *fortissimo*. Nothing was, I found, more difficult to get the British public, and

even my chiefs at Printing House Square, to realize than the importance of the German Press as a faithful echo, not necessarily of any spontaneous expression of German public opinion but of the opinion which the rulers wanted to create in furtherance of German policy.

As I was unwell in the winter of 1895 I took leave to Egypt and went on from there to the Far East, where Germany suddenly displayed unprecedented activity and soon joined hands dramatically with France and Russia to enforce the restitution to China of some of the most important of Japan's prizes of victory at the close of the Chinese-Japanese War. While I was out there Holstein took the trouble to write me the letter I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter. It was conceived in his customary tone of friendliness towards England, but on my return to Berlin in the autumn he was chasing another hare, and, though he spoke rather in sorrow than in anger, I had never before seen him so wrought up against British policy or what he professed to believe was British policy all over the world and most of all in South Africa, where the Uitlander question had grown very acute. The Press Bureau was in full cry after us, and the Emperor himself, who had come back from a visit to Cowes in August, 1895, immediately after the return of a Conservative Government to power, bitterly irritated by Lord Salisbury's elusiveness, was talking freely about what he would do if England ventured to lay hands upon the Boers. Sir Edward Malet was about to retire. As an old friend of Germany, who had enjoyed throughout his twelve years' Embassy the confidence and goodwill of three German Emperors, he ventured to take an opportunity of impressing upon William II the concern with which the British Government observed the growing hostility manifested not only in the German Press, but in responsible quarters towards England just when she was confronted with very difficult problems in South Africa, and he proceeded to warn His Majesty, not in his official capacity but as an old friend who had always worked for

cordial relations between the two countries, that British public opinion was exceptionally sensitive with regard to South Africa and would never allow British Ministers to tolerate any foreign Power's interference between England and the Transvaal. The Emperor never forgave Sir Edward, and when the latter left Berlin a few weeks later, he grudged him some of the ordinary courtesies with which a departing ambassador expects to be speeded. I had been told confidentially the gist of Sir Edward's conversation with the Emperor, and, even had I not, Holstein's frequent sermons about the folly of British policy in incurring Germany's enmity, and his hints of the far worse temper prevailing in the 'highest' quarters, and the *fortissimo* towards which the Press Bureau was working up with a heavy foot on the pedal would have warned me that there was trouble, and serious trouble, ahead. In my private letters to my chief, to whom I could write much more fully and freely than in my published despatches to *The Times* in which I was anxious not to aggravate the existing tension, I told him quite plainly that a storm was brewing and might burst at any moment.

It burst with the Emperor's famous telegram to Kruger after the wretched Jameson raid, and in order that I should not mistake, or be tempted to minimize, the meaning of that telegram, I was asked on the morning of its official publication to call at the Foreign Office. Holstein received me rather stiffly and told me it was not he but the State Secretary, then Baron von Marschall, who wished to see me. He at once led me through his little side door into the Minister's room. Marschall, with whom my relations had hitherto been extremely friendly, at once laid stress upon the gravity of the action taken by the Emperor with the complete concurrence of the Chancellor, and, he added, with his own. The moment had arrived when it was necessary for Germany to give England plain warning that she was deeply interested in South African affairs, and in the maintenance of the Dutch

Republics, and therefore intended to make her voice heard and listened to. The Imperial telegram was no mere impulsive expression of sympathy with a kindred people, but an action of State – *eine Staatsaktion* – to which His Majesty had lent special weight by putting it in the form of an 'All-highest' message addressed to the President of the South African Republic. Baron von Marschall wished me to understand this quite clearly, as, though he was as anxious as ever to preserve the friendliest relations possible between Germany and England, he felt that for that very reason it was most important that the British public should not be left under any misapprehension as to the meaning of what had happened and the unfortunate consequences that the tendency of British statesmen to ignore German interests would involve. The situation had been fully discussed at a special Council of the Ministers presided over by the Emperor, who had himself prepared the draft of the telegram to President Kruger. (I learnt subsequently on very good authority that the Emperor's original draft had contained a more threatening passage which was ultimately omitted at the instance of the Chancellor, then Prince Hohenlohe, who was prompted by the Foreign Secretary and Holstein.) Marschall, whose manner was throughout quite frank and friendly, as indeed I always found him, then proceeded to rehearse to me once more the whole list of Germany's 'grievances' against England – many of them arising merely out of the British Government's reluctance to irritate the French unnecessarily in colonial questions – and wound up by reiterating that it had been high time for His Majesty to give us 'a lesson,' for which I at least had too long enjoyed the confidence of Holstein and himself not to be fully prepared. I ventured to observe that England might not be willing to accept that 'lesson' in the chastened spirit which His Majesty expected.

The angry outburst of public opinion in this country, the prompt mobilization of a Flying Squadron, and above all the immediate relaxation of the tension between the United

States and Great Britain over the Venezuelan question, on which the German Government had heavily speculated, caused genuine amazement in Berlin, where the cue was at once given to box the compass and minimize the significance of the Emperor's telegram which Marschall had so solemnly described to me as a '*Staatsaktion.*' That was a cue I could not possibly follow, and when I pointed out in *The Times* the grave significance of the orders originally given for the landing in Delagoa Bay of marines from a German cruiser to proceed to Pretoria for the protection of the German interests in the Transvaal, Holstein was so incensed that he closed the Foreign Office doors for some weeks against me.

The storm gradually died down, but I did not attempt to conceal the impression which it had made on me and my growing doubt as to the sincerity of the assurances of friendship for England which were once more poured out from the Wilhelmstrasse, and were, I knew, repeatedly conveyed by the Emperor himself to his royal grandmother in Windsor, of whom he always stood in considerable awe. I left Berlin a few months later to take over the Foreign Department of *The Times* in London, at first as deputy for Mackenzie Wallace, who retired altogether about two years later.

The experiences of the last few years in Berlin had driven me slowly and reluctantly to the conclusion that England had to reckon now with a very different Germany from the old Bismarckian Germany whose formidable power, when once it had been built up with blood and iron, was directed mainly, though not without occasional rattling of the German sabre, to the preservation of peace as the surest guarantee for the consolidation of her predominant position on the European continent. The 'new course' which William II meant to steer might not yet be definitely set, but that it would be a stormy and adventurous one was to be apprehended both from the symptoms of reckless irresponsibility which the young Emperor had already betrayed and from the changes already wrought in the life and temper of the

nation by the novel intoxication of unprecedented material prosperity. Bismarck's policy had been on principle a purely continental policy. That was too narrow a field for William II. His was clearly to be a 'world policy' with the 'trident,' as he once said, 'in Germany's mailed fist.'

If Berlin threatened to be henceforth the most dangerous of all storm centres it was important that *The Times* should have a correspondent there who would know how to read the storm signals. On my recommendation the late Mr. George Saunders, whose work for another London newspaper I had followed carefully whilst I was in Berlin, was appointed to be my successor there. He knew Germany well and I had been his best man when he married a German lady, the daughter of a well-known banker with whom Holstein also was on intimate terms, though his liberal opinions and artistic interests had formerly brought him into closer contact with the Crown Prince and Crown Princess Frederick than with Bismarckian circles. Saunders and I were in close agreement on most questions of foreign policy, as well as on the crucial question of Anglo-German relations. With a genuine liking for Germany he, too, still believed in the value for both countries of close co-operation in the maintenance of European peace, but like me he was beginning to doubt whether William II was as anxious as we were to ensue peace. He shared entirely my view that it was the duty of the Berlin correspondent of *The Times* to watch and report accurately such indications of the real trend and purpose of German policy as were more frequently disclosed in the activities of the Press Bureau than in the public utterances of the Emperor or of his Ministers, and at the same time to remain scrupulously careful not to stimulate ill-feeling in either country. *Objectivtät*, to borrow the German word which was not, however, very much in vogue in German politics, was to be his guiding principle as it had been mine. It was on those lines that we worked together for many years, he in Berlin and I at Printing House Square, whilst German 'world policy' was shaping

steadily towards world conflict, and Prince Bülow did us the honour of associating our names in a testimonial unique, I think, in the history of journalism, and none the less significant because it was never intended to receive publicity.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

THERE is no need for me to apologize for reproducing Bülow's testimonial since Lord Grey of Fallodon has thought it sufficiently important to call attention to it in his political memories. I had long since retired from my editorial connection with *The Times* and George Saunders had died before the post-war publication of the German secret archives disclosed the tribute paid to me and to my successor in Berlin in a 'very secret' memorandum written by Bülow when he was in attendance as Foreign Secretary upon William II during a visit to Windsor shortly after the outbreak of the South African War in 1899. The German Minister, who was already in effect, though not yet in title, Chancellor, began by observing that 'English politicians know little about the Continent. From a continental point of view they know about as much as we do about ideas in Peru or Siam. They are naïve in their conscious egotism and in a certain blind confidence. They find it difficult to credit really bad intentions in others. They are very quiet, very phlegmatic and very optimistic. . . . This country breathes riches, comfort, content, and confidence in its own strength and in the future. One notices that the people have never seen the enemy in their own country, and that they cannot believe that things should ever go wrong seriously, either at home or abroad. With the exception of a few leading men they work little and take their time for everything. Physically and morally, it is a very healthy country.' Then, after a short and somewhat depreciatory description of the leading members of the Cabinet, Bülow concludes – and this is the passage which I naturally treasure – 'On the whole it is certain that opinion in England is far less anti-German than opinion in Germany is anti-English. *Therefore those Englishmen like Chirol and Saunders are most dangerous for us, who know from their own*

observation the depth and bitterness of German antipathy against England.'

This memorandum, it must be noted, was written at the very time when, England having made important concessions to Germany in the matter of the Samoan Islands, Bülow had engaged Joseph Chamberlain in 'heart to heart' talks, as the latter at least conceived them to be, following a conference at Windsor which besides Bülow and Chamberlain included the Emperor and Sir Frank Lascelles, and, as I afterwards heard from Sir Frank, took the form of 'a Cabinet Council to which I (Sir Frank) was invited as attached to His Majesty's person.' The outcome was the British Colonial Secretary's great speech at Leicester, in which he stated his strong conviction that England could no longer afford to remain permanently isolated, and that the most natural alliance for her was with the German Empire. Yet a few days later on his return to Berlin, Bülow replied with a speech in the Reichstag which poured derision on Chamberlain's public and private overtures, and breathed just the hostility to England which the German Minister had declared Saunders and myself to be 'dangerous' people because we realized its depth and bitterness more fully than the majority of our fellow-countrymen. For the moment, at any rate, Chamberlain's eyes were opened, and there was no further talk then of an Anglo-German alliance. At times, the South African War caused dangerous tension between the two Governments, as for instance when British cruisers seized two German mail steamers suspected of carrying contraband of war to the Boers, and the Emperor wanted to send a fire-eating Admiral to London with an ultimatum of his own, whilst a constant stream of hatred and vituperation was poured out on England from the whole of the German press. During the Boer War I twice visited Berlin, where Sir Frank Lascelles, who was one of my oldest friends, was always delighted to welcome me, though the Emperor, whom he trusted much more than I did, would sometimes chaff him about 'your scribbling friend, Chirol.' The German capital was at that

time no pleasant place for an Englishman, and least of all for one who understood German. Even one's acquaintances were apt to display an exultant *Schadenfreude* over our troubles. Whilst I was prepared to discount the coarse abuse of the meaner newspapers, which was no worse than that of a large part of the press in France and other Continental countries where unstinted worship of the Boers gallantly fighting for their freedom found vent in vulgar denunciations of England, I felt that there was something far more sinister in the German campaign of calumny directed against the British troops in South Africa. One book of caricatures, drawn not by the ordinary staff of the comic newspapers, but by reputable artists well known all over Germany, was prominent in every bookstall, and nowhere more prominent than at the railway station that served the Emperor's summer residence at Potsdam. The frontispiece represented the old Queen Victoria holding a court and 'conferring the Victoria Cross on a British soldier for having raped more Boer girls than anyone else of his age'! That such abominable ribaldry could be not only tolerated but countenanced in the 'best' circles in Berlin, seemed to me to give more than anything else the measure of that intense and bitter 'antipathy' to which Bülow had borne witness.

But, as he had also observed, Englishmen find it difficult to credit really bad intentions in others. As the war went on and the resistance of the Boers was slowly worn down, the German Government began to doubt the wisdom of backing the loser. The Emperor had sounded France and Russia as to the possibility of a collective European intervention in favour of peace, but in so discreet a form that when Paris and St. Petersburg declined to be drawn, he thought it was safe to make capital out of his own failure and himself went round to the British Embassy to leave a card for Sir Frank Lascelles on which he took credit for having defeated the intrigues of England's enemies on the Continent. In one of those strangely fluctuating moods in which he imagined he was displaying his match-

less diplomatic adroitness, he ventured even to run counter to German public opinion by inviting Lord Roberts over to the German Grand Manœuvres and conferring on him the Black Eagle, which was the highest of all Prussian orders. When President Kruger came to Europe to make a last attempt to secure help from those who had been so lavish of their sympathy with the Boers, he was met with an official intimation that his presence was not desired in Berlin. Those were, however, the days of extremely secret diplomacy, and it was not known till many years afterwards to the general public, either in Germany or in England, that the conclusion of a formal alliance between the two countries had never been nearer than in the latter part of the South African War, which at one moment had threatened the very maintenance of peace between them. Mainly through the intermediary of Baron von Eckhardstein, who, owing to Count Hatzfeld's ill-health, was frequently in charge of the German Embassy in London, conversations had been resumed in the late summer of 1901 between the two capitals on much the same lines that Chamberlain had proposed and Bülow had rejected in October, 1899. They purported to be unofficial conversations; but whilst Eckhardstein hardly seemed to carry sufficient weight to commit the German Foreign Office, let alone the Emperor with whom he was scarcely a *persona grata*, the British Ministers chiefly concerned were some of the most influential members of the Cabinet, not indeed Lord Salisbury or Mr. Balfour, but Joseph Chamberlain, the Duke of Devonshire and even Lord Lansdowne, who had relieved the Prime Minister at the Foreign Office just a year earlier. The conversations took place between them and Eckhardstein, sometimes in their own offices or in their country seats, and sometimes at his private house or at that of Alfred Rothschild, who was ever ready to act as a trusty go-between. I gradually acquired from various confidential sources sufficient knowledge of what was going on to get a note of warning occasionally sounded in *The Times* as, amongst other reasons, I had not

much confidence in German overtures which had not, it seemed, been definitely approved by the Emperor. Just when the *pourparlers* were ripe to pass from the unofficial to the official stage, I received (in October, 1901) from Holstein, who had given me rather a cold shoulder the last time I had been in Berlin, a pressing invitation to come and talk over with the Imperial Chancellor the whole question of Anglo-German relations which were about to be placed, he hoped, on a sound and permanent footing of amity in accordance with the highest interests of both countries.

The invitation took me by surprise, as I did not imagine myself to be in very good odour in the Wilhelmstrasse. But that was no reason for declining it. I was received first of all by Holstein, who began by lecturing me with even more than his old severity on England's incurable distrust of German policy, which *The Times*, doubtless under my inspiration, invariably encouraged. I replied, as I always did on such occasions, that I had originally come to Berlin with no distrust whatever of Germany, but that during the years I had spent there as correspondent of *The Times* I had watched with increasing concern the new orientation of German policy under the erratic and impulsive guidance of the Emperor, and that since then the whole of German activities in South Africa, in China, and even in the Near and Middle East, and, last but not least, the acknowledged purpose of German naval expansion, were almost avowedly directed towards what the Germans themselves described as *Welt-Herrschaft*, or World Dominion, which Germany could not achieve, and must know she could not achieve, without coming into conflict with England, just as Spain and France had in former times. Was it possible in these circumstances for any Englishman to view without distrust suggestions for closer relations, and even for an alliance, between the two countries, secretly put forward from time to time by German statesmen whose public utterances were often in violent contrast with their confidential assurances of good-will? When we had once more agreed to

differ, he begged me anyhow to look not to the past, but to the future. We must be either friends or enemies, and the Imperial Chancellor, as he himself did, wished us to be friends, and wished to convince me too that we could be friends. But before seeing me Count Bülow – he was not yet Prince – desired me to know exactly what had passed between the Emperor and Lord Salisbury at Cowes, as it supplied the master key to the peculiar workings of the Emperor's mind, which, he admitted, sometimes laid German policy open to unfortunate misconstruction.

The German version, as it had been given to me soon after the Cowes interview, was that immediately after Lord Salisbusy came into office again in July, 1895, the German Government had appealed to him to give Italy the support and facilities of which she stood sorely in need in the Red Sea after her disasters in Abyssinia. Lord Salisbury had replied that, in view of England's delicate relations with France, he did not see his way to granting Italy the facilities she desired in the Red Sea without exciting French jealousies, but was quite willing to give her a proof of England's good-will by recognizing her reversionary claims to Albania and Tripoli in the event of the disruption of the Ottoman Empire. The German Government had strongly demurred to this suggestion, as it did not meet Italy's necessities, which were in the Red Sea and not elsewhere, and it moreover involved the admission in principle of a partition of the Ottoman Empire, which was incompatible with German policy. Lord Salisbury thereupon, it was alleged, far from repudiating the idea of such partition, had told the German Ambassador, Count Hatzfeldt, that in his opinion the time had arrived for the Powers to come to an amicable agreement as to the apportionment of claims in the event of Turkey falling to pieces, and asked him to invite his Government to draw up a scheme defining Germany's views and desires in such a contingency. The German Government immediately instructed Count Hatzfeldt to reply that far from contemplating the dismemberment of the Ottoman

Empire it attached the greatest importance to its preservation within existing limits, and desired the Ambassador not to allow himself to be drawn into any such discussion. The Emperor had in the meantime left for Cowes, but the correspondence was communicated to him on his arrival there, with a warning that Lord Salisbury would probably broach the question with him, as he indeed did, according to the Emperor.

I was now shown what purported and appeared to be the Emperor's own record of the conversation, in order to convince me that Lord Salisbury had actually sprung upon him *ex abrupto* a full-blown scheme for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. It recited, much as I had already heard, their disagreement as to the help which England could give Italy in the Red Sea. Lord Salisbury had been willing to give her a proof of his good-will by supporting her eventual expansion in Albania and Tripoli, but the Emperor had met this suggestion by pointing out the futility of encouraging Italian aspirations in either direction, as France would never consent to Italian expansion in North Africa without a war, and if France were beaten, Tunis, not Tripoli, would fall to Italy, whereas Albania could not be promised to Italy without driving Austria out of the Triple Alliance. Nor was he prepared to discuss questions which were purely speculative unless they were really meant to be the prelude for a complete dismemberment of Turkey, to which he was, from every point of view, fundamentally opposed. More striking was the great asperity of the long and sharp controversy which, according to the Emperor, ensued with regard to Sultan Abdul Hamid and existing conditions in Turkey, where, in Lord Salisbury's view, the horrible tale of the Armenian massacres, which had just then begun, went to show once more the impossibility of preserving the Ottoman Empire. The Emperor, who was deaf to all such arguments, concluded his report by saying that as he did not wish to part from Lord Salisbury under the impression of such acute differences, he had proposed that they should resume the conversation on the following day, but

whether as the result of an accidental misunderstanding or for reasons of his own, Lord Salisbury returned to London without calling upon him again or vouchsafing any explanation or apology.

When Baron von Marschall gave me in 1896 his account of the Cowes interview, I brought it to Lord Salisbury's notice, and it elicited from him, as Sir Ian Malcolm – then his assistant private secretary – told me, the characteristic remark that it showed the expediency of having a third person present when talking to the Emperor, if he made it his practice to put into his interlocutor's mouth proposals which emanated from himself. When I saw in Berlin the Emperor's own record of the interview, Lord Salisbury had left the Foreign Office, and from inquiries which I made there, I gathered that he had left no account of it on record. It was his habit to transact much, and often the most important, of his work as Foreign Secretary in private and confidential letters to British representatives abroad, which were never placed on official record and of which he kept the contents to himself. But it is certainly unfortunate that of an interview out of which German diplomacy made such capital there should have been no record that could have been produced to correct or supplement the Emperor's, though Lord Salisbury cannot have underrated its importance, nor have long remained unaware of the construction placed by the Emperor on his own language. The other documents shown to me were intended to acquit Germany of any bad faith in connection with the Anglo-German agreement of 1900 with regard to China. As I had been out in the Far East at the time and had had first-hand information even from German sources on the subject, these documents made even less impression upon me than the Emperor's record of the Cowes Conversation. The purpose for which Prince Bülow had wished me to have an opportunity of perusing these papers revealed itself as soon as he himself received me in the Chancellor's Palace.

He started almost at once by impressing on me the dis-

astrous effect upon the Emperor of the proposals made to him by Lord Salisbury at Cowes, which had never ceased to rankle since 1895, and might still prove a serious obstacle to his Majesty's cordial acceptance of the idea of a close alliance between Germany and England, though German and British statesmen were now happily at one in recognizing its value for both countries. He had wished me to see the Emperor's own record of the conversation in order that I might realize for myself the shock which proposals for the dismemberment of Turkey were calculated to give a Sovereign who, apart from Germany's political interests in the preservation of the Ottoman Empire, considered himself – perhaps too sentimentally – tied by the bonds of personal friendship to the Sultan. When I argued that the Emperor's version itself did not bear out that interpretation of Lord Salisbury's language, and that it may well have been inspired by righteous indignation at Turkish misrule and a sincere conviction that Turkey could not and was not fit to survive under such conditions, the Imperial Chancellor tried hard to find out from me whether I was in possession of any account that Lord Salisbury himself might have given of the interview, or what account of it was current in well-informed circles in England. I was not in a position to gratify his curiosity, even if I had wished to. He went on to illustrate the difficulties which he himself had encountered in dealing with Lord Salisbury by relating to me in his own fashion various passages of arms between the German and British Governments, notably over the Anglo-German Agreement of 1900 with regard to China. According to Lord Salisbury, it applied to Manchuria as well as to the Yangtze Valley, whereas the Germans, who were anxious not to fall out with Russia, declared that it had never been meant to apply to Manchuria, but only or mainly to the Yangtze Valley. Prince Bülow was very emphatic on this point, and went so far as to assure me that Lord Salisbury had all along been aware of, and a consenting party to, German reservations which, only out of deference to British public opinion, had

not been embodied in the official agreement. When I objected that I had a very different explanation given to me at the time in China even by German authorities, the Chancellor, who was determined to show himself the *charmeur* that his Slav blood enabled him to be when he liked, sought to get the conversation into smoother waters by the most extravagant praise of Lord Lansdowne, as Lord Salisbury's successor at the Foreign Office. Prince Bülow was scarcely more convincing when he expatiated on the many proofs of genuine friendship for England which the Emperor, he assured me, had given during the Boer War, when he had more than once offered the British War Office some good advice, which had been unfortunately disregarded. He even dwelt with less than his usual tact on the filial piety which had prompted the Emperor's long stay in England on the occasion of Queen Victoria's funeral! Could I, he asked, really believe after all that in the Emperor's hostility to England, or, for that matter, in the existence of any real Anglophobia in Germany? With regard to His Majesty's personal sentiments, it was not, I replied, for me to discuss them with his Chancellor; but as to the attitude of the German Government and German public opinion, would he really have me believe, after all the years I had spent in Berlin, that the Press Bureau of the German Foreign Office had not been privy to the violent, and often obscene, outbursts of Anglophobia in the German Press, of which anonymous German correspondents had showered specimens on *The Times* office in London, throughout the Boer War, or whether the preamble to the German Navy Bill was not a far more significant indication of Germany's attitude towards England than ceremonial demonstrations of Imperial amity, which alternated with less public, but perhaps more genuine, exhibitions of the Emperor's hostility. Again Prince Bülow was all smiles and soft words. England was surely too powerful at sea to be jealous of Germany's modest attempt to follow in her footsteps, and was it not an English saying that imitation is the best form of flattery? More might, perhaps,

have been done, he acknowledged, to restrain irresponsible scribblers in the Press, who did an infinity of mischief. But, he went on in a more serious tone, why waste time over side issues? The future alone mattered, and Germany and Great Britain together could assure the future peace of the world by joining hands to defend it. Germany was ready and willing, and England had been passing through painful experiences, which had taught many of her statesmen that it was unwise for her to rely on splendid isolation. Mr. Chamberlain had admitted it, and declared Germany to be her natural ally on the Continent. I was driven to remind him that his own speeches in the Reichstag had not been a very fortunate response to Mr. Chamberlain's first overtures, but he passed this off by remarking that had Mr. Chamberlain been a diplomatist, he would not have blurted the matter out so crudely and placed him, the Chancellor, in such an embarrassing position. 'But this time,' he said, 'we have all been very discreet, and I know that you also can be extremely discreet.' So he was going to outline to me the general terms of a defensive alliance as he conceived it. Neither in Europe nor in Africa nor in America nor in the Pacific was there any need to discriminate between the several interests of the two countries. Both might well be content with the maintenance of the *status quo* and a reciprocal guarantee of their territorial possessions and spheres of influence as they already existed. In Asia, he explained, the situation was somewhat different; not that their interests clashed there, but they were on such vastly different planes of importance that Germany could hardly be expected to make herself jointly responsible for England's vast dependencies in a continent in which Germany had acquired but the barest foothold by the lease of Kio-chau from China. Nor would he conceal from me that Germany could not afford to compromise her own relations with Russia. Indeed, the sensitiveness of St. Petersburg in regard to Anglo-Russian antagonism in Asia might defeat the very purpose of peaceful conservation which an Anglo-German alliance could

alone have, by rendering its implications *a priori* suspect in the eyes of Russia. Fortunately there was every reason to believe that Japan, whose interests were in the main identical with those of England, was in a position, and would be fully disposed to provide the substantial guarantee for the maintenance of the *status quo* in Asia which British interests doubtless needed, and an alliance between Great Britain and Japan, which Germany would view with the utmost favour as a complement to an Anglo-German alliance, would round off the world-wide circle of peace insurance which he contemplated.

The exclusion of Asia from the scope of the proposed Anglo-German alliance seemed to me a fatal bar, as it made the bargain a very one-sided one in Germany's favour. Such a treaty would for instance bind us to support Germany against Russia and France in Europe—and I mentioned the question of Alsace-Lorraine in particular—and possibly even in the Pacific against America and Japan, whereas in Asia, the one continent in which our position was most liable to attack from Russia and France, Germany would be in no way bound to support England. But the Chancellor was not to be moved, and merely laid renewed stress on the countervailing advantages for Great Britain of a concurrent alliance with Japan. Of the latter I admitted I had been for some time a convinced advocate, but I could not dissemble my surprise at hearing the Imperial Chancellor recommend it, as the German Emperor had so frequently and publicly manifested his dislike and distrust of the Yellow Race, which he had himself pilloried in a famous cartoon drawn by his own hand. The Chancellor merely remarked, with a shrug of his shoulders, that his Imperial master, though impulsive and sentimental, always ended by listening to reason; and as our conversation had already lasted over an hour and he had another appointment, he concluded by begging me to think over carefully what he had told me, and use my influence with *The Times* to bring Anglo-German relations back to the old footing of mutual

confidence and intimacy for which his great predecessor, Prince Bismarck, had always striven, though the British Government and British public opinion had not then been ripe for an actual Alliance. No one could rate higher than he did the influence of the British Press which, he regretted to say, had no real counterpart in Germany. I ventured to repeat that whatever the merits or demerits of the German Press, I had lived too long in Berlin not to know how dependent it was on official inspiration, and that I should therefore look for some echo in its columns of the friendly sentiments and hopes which he had been good enough to express. Leaning forward then towards me, and taking my hands in his, he gave me with the utmost earnestness an assurance which I recorded, I think, almost textually after I left him.

'Believe me, and I give you my word of honour as I sit in this chair as the Chancellor of the German Empire, not only shall I never countenance the hostile attacks upon your country of which I know a large – too large – section of the German Press is often guilty, but I shall never allow, as in the past I have never allowed, the anti-British sentiments of an ignorant public to deflect me by so much as a hair's breadth from the policy of true friendliness towards England which lies nearest my heart.'

The apparent earnestness of this assurance impressed me far more than the general substance of his arguments, whether in explanation of Germany's past policy, or in support of an Anglo-German alliance. But I was to have almost immediately a startling proof of the value of the Imperial Chancellor's 'word of honour.' The day before I started for Berlin Mr. Chamberlain had delivered a speech at Edinburgh, in which he had indignantly repelled the odious attacks made in Germany upon the conduct of British troops in South Africa, whose behaviour, he declared, could bear favourable comparison with that of any other army engaged in war, the German army itself not excepted. That speech had been reproduced with extraordinarily few comments in the German

Press whilst I was in Berlin, and the Imperial Chancellor must have been in possession of it when he received me and showered praise on Mr. Chamberlain as the far-sighted statesman who had been the first to recognize the value to Great Britain of a close alliance with Germany. In spite of all the openings which our conversation afforded, he had made no reference whatever to the speech. But no sooner had I returned to London than the speech was suddenly dug out again by the German Press, semi-official as well as unofficial, and made the pretext for one of the fiercest outbreaks of Anglophobia during the whole South African War; and the same Prince Bülow who had given me a few days before his word of honour that never would the anti-British sentiments of an ignorant public deflect him by so much as a hair's breadth from the policy of true friendliness towards England which lay near to his heart, got up in his place in the Reichstag and delivered himself of an impassioned oration only too well calculated to raise to a white heat of passion the popular feeling which he had so strongly reprobated in private.

I had not long to wait for an explanation. I received it direct from Holstein. He had begun by trying to minimize in long telegrams, which he addressed to me at *The Times*, the significance of Prince Bülow's language in the Reichstag; but when he saw that he was making no impression, he blurted out the truth curtly in another very short message to me: '*Wir haben unseren Korb bekommen und wir danken dafür*' – i.e. 'Our offer of marriage has been rejected and we are conveying our thanks!' Nothing could make his meaning clearer than these idiomatic colloquialisms. It was that Germany was replying in her own way to the rejection from Downing Street, on the very day I left Berlin, of an Alliance on the basis proposed by the Chancellor, and that she would have none on any other terms.

For once Holstein had lost his temper with me on paper. I drew my own conclusions, but I had too great a liking for him personally to answer him in the same tone. When the

New Year came, he wrote me, as if nothing had happened, a long and very friendly letter written in English and ending rather facetiously – which with him always meant the olive branch – by hoping that 'during the holidays you have achieved a mark at ping-pong, which I understand to be the sensation of the hour.' But his purpose was evidently to try to undo the bad impression which my last visit to Berlin had made upon me. The letter was marked 'Strictly confidential,' and after tracing back the original idea of an Anglo-German Alliance in 1899 to the conversations at Windsor to which I have already referred, he went on to say that doubts had from the first existed in the Emperor's mind as to whether Lord Salisbury was privy to Joseph Chamberlain's overtures and would in any case favour the proposed alliance. All this was, however, clearly meant only to lead up to an explanation of the break-down of the recent negotiations which might pave the way for their renewal. Holstein imputed it partly to a *faux pas* of the German Ambassador, 'poor Hatzfeld,' who was suffering from 'nervous over-excitement' and was in consequence immediately relieved of his functions, and partly to Lord Salisbury's attitude. He (Holstein) had 'formally and repeatedly' expressed the conviction that no agreement of any kind would be come to whilst Lord Salisbury had a voice in the matter, and the same view was held 'in higher regions.' But, aware doubtless that Lord Salisbury's retirement from the Premiership was not very far off, Holstein professed to regret that the British Government had taken advantage of the feverish restlessness of an invalid – Count Hatzfeld – 'to send us the mittens in all form.' Other passages betrayed Holstein's old obsession as to the fundamental hostility of British policy which had sympathized 'ever since 1864' with Germany's enemies and was 'leaving no stone unturned to bring about a great continental war,' for which Lord Salisbury was waiting, though he preferred 'the old Byzantine expedient of buying off the barbarians' to a friendly agreement with the German Empire. But the note

on which Holstein ended was that, as both he and I were working for peace and amicable relations we 'ought not to take offence reciprocally, for if we cannot shape things according to our will, we must even look at, and take, them as they are.'

The latter part of Holstein's advice I was quite prepared to take, but his letter, far from achieving the purpose for which it had been written, merely deepened the distrust already created by Prince Bülow's sudden *volte-face*, which had once more reflected not the protestations of friendship which the Chancellor had lavished on me in his room, but the bitter hostility which had won him the ringing applause of the Reichstag. It was deepened still further when a few weeks later (January 30, 1902) the conclusion of the first treaty of alliance between Great Britain and Japan, in which the Chancellor himself had urged that we should seek a counterpoise to Russian aggression in Asia as a corollary to the projected Anglo-German alliance, was denounced in Germany as an odious pact with the Yellow Race, and a dangerous betrayal of European solidarity in grossly selfish disregard of the Emperor's repeated warnings against the 'Yellow Peril.' German anger at the Anglo-Japanese Treaty did not tend to make me regret the strong support *The Times* had given it, and still less did I regret it when I saw Germany sparing no effort to push Russia on her desperate path of Far Eastern adventure, in order to divert her energies from Europe, and when the almost inevitable conflict between Russia and Japan at last occurred, labouring to arouse in Russia the wildest suspicions of England, as for instance over the Dogger Bank incident, in order to provoke a rupture between her and this country, which might have brought in the French on the Russian side and destroyed once and for all any prospect of the understanding between France and England into which Germany herself was driving the two Western nations.

No less significant was Bülow's belated complaint that the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904 had not been com-

municated beforehand to Germany. Prince Bülow had at first admitted that it did not affect German interests, and the complaint was not raised until a year later, when the Russian defeats in Manchuria had satisfied the German Government that to whatever length Germany might go, Russia was far too severely crippled to be able to raise a finger to protect her French Ally.

I was in Berlin for a short time soon after the Emperor's demonstrative visit to Tangier and the fall of Delcassé, and once more Holstein received me, though he could do so only privately and as an old friend on whose discretion he could rely, however far apart we had drifted politically. He was, I knew, largely responsible for the whole Moroccan adventure, from which the Emperor himself had been inclined to shrink just before he landed at Tangier. Holstein's object was to show me that no more on this occasion than on any other in the course of his long career had his policy been inspired by hostility to England. He was evidently obsessed by the old Bismarckian tradition that there could never be any real understanding between England and France, and as it was a *conditio sine qua non* of German security to keep France isolated, Germany was bound to take the earliest opportunity to drive a wedge into the Entente before it had time to consolidate. That his policy had in this respect failed and would continue to fail he flatly refused to believe. It had, he said, succeeded in Paris since the French had already sacrificed Delcassé, who had signed the Anglo-French agreement, and England would very soon realize that she could never rely on the French. Again we had to agree to differ, and he went on to admit the increasing difficulty of carrying on any foreign policy when the Emperor was surrounded by a camarilla of shameless flatterers and adventurers who worked on his intense vanity and love of excitement. Holstein was especially bitter against 'the admirals' who were exploiting the Emperor's mania for ships to drive Germany into a policy of naval expansion which could only be carried out at the

expense of her land forces, and, worse still, at the risk of collision with England. There, he reminded me, lay the danger which Bismarck had in his mind when he said he was not going to quarrel with England over a little bit of Africa – and in a far more formidable shape than any trumpery Morocco question. He went very near to admitting that a war with France would not have been unwelcome to him if only because it would have served to bring the Emperor back to the bed-rock of Germany's continental position in Europe from his dangerous vision of her future lying on the seas. When he said as I took leave of him that in spite of everything he was glad to have seen me again, he added somewhat bitterly that anyhow his days were nearly over; for he had very powerful enemies, and above all 'the admirals' to whom he was going to make his *standpunkt klar* – an allusion probably to the Memorandum in which he shortly afterwards pointed out very forcibly the political dangers of naval expansion.

I only saw him once again in 1908, and that was after he at last resigned once too often, and, as Bülow, having this time left him to his fate, said, 'His Majesty had been pleased to accept' his resignation. He was then a dying man, utterly dejected and broken, and his last words to me were that 'the young Emperor would either die in a mad-house or destroy the German Empire.' His enemies even now do not spare his memory, but I shall always have a more friendly recollection and a greater regard for him than for anyone else I have known amongst the men who must share with him, and in an even higher degree, the responsibility for the 'new course' that followed William II's dismissal of the 'old pilot.' His fundamental mistake perhaps was to imagine that a Bismarckian policy could be carried on without a Bismarck – and with William II!

Whilst the foreign excursions and alarums in the full panoply of 'Germany's shining armour' with which William II dazzled his people and disturbed the whole world were public property and fit matter for discussion in *The Times*, informa-

tion which could obviously not be proclaimed from the housetops continued to reach me from confidential sources as to the alarming symptoms in more intimate matters of the same irresponsibility which the Emperor had begun to display when I was residing in Berlin. No one ever incriminated his private life, but the public trial of his bosom friend, Prince Philip Eulenburg, revealed the decadent tendencies which he tolerated amongst his immediate surroundings, and that was only one of the many similar scandals in social and military circles closest to his Court, over which the Press Bureau had strict orders to draw a veil. His own incursion into journalism with his famous 'interview' in the *Daily Telegraph* (October 27, 1908) missed fire in England, where his profuse assurances of friendship were not taken very seriously, but they provoked in Germany such an outburst of popular indignation that the word 'abdication' was whispered even in the lobbies of the Federal Council, whilst the 'All Highest,' having left Prince Bülow in Berlin to get him out of the mess, took refuge with his latest favourite, Prince Fürstenberg, who entertained him with a frivolous round of festivities ending in a *danse macabre* with the sudden death of the head of the Emperor's Military Cabinet in the bewitching costume of a short-skirted *ballerina*! Prince Bülow's adroitness managed to save the political situation, but the Emperor never forgave him for the halting terms in which the Chancellor had been fain to defend him in the Reichstag, and when he selected Bethmann Hollweg to succeed him, the new Chancellor's insignificant personality tended to reassure public opinion, but, however well-meaning he may have been, he was much too *burgerlich* to be a match for a galaxy of admirals and generals far better attuned to their Imperial Master's megalomania, of whom Tirpitz was henceforth the favoured spokesman. I had retired from *The Times* two years before the last stage was reached on the road to Armageddon, but on August 2, 1914, when with the German invasion of Belgium the die was being finally cast, I spent the evening at the

house of my old friend Sir Frank Lascelles, who had so long clung to the delusion that William II had been more sinned against than sinning. His son-in-law, Sir Cecil Spring Rice – whose splendid services in helping to bring America into the war have never received the recognition which some future historian will secure for them – was at home on leave from Washington. His prescience had already read the catastrophic trend of the young Emperor's restless ambitions when he and I had been together in Berlin during the first decade of the new reign. None of our small party was free from the oppression of an impending cataclysm. But it was he who gave utterance to what most of us were feeling when he applied to the Hohenzollern War Lord's challenge one of the verses of the Psalms appointed to be read that day at Evening Prayer: 'For he hath said in his heart: Tush, I shall never be cast down; there shall no harm happen unto me'; and he added with all the fervour of his patriotic faith that it rested now with the British people to see that the last verse of the same Psalm should also be fulfilled and 'the man of the earth be no more exalted.'

None of us, however, could then foresee that the Hohenzollern War Lord would end by fleeing to neutral soil, leaving to their fate his war-worn legions who had deserved better of him, and the great German Empire which had been his proud inheritance.

CHAPTER XXII

A WAR MISSION TO THE BALKANS

DURING the first few months of the War I was able to turn to a fresh purpose the knowledge of the German Press I had acquired whilst I was in Berlin. The Foreign Office kept me supplied with German newspapers which it continued to receive through Holland, and from the materials which even a rigidly censored Press could not help providing, I prepared as full a survey as possible of internal conditions in Germany in regard to trade and industry and finance. I was convinced that the struggle would be long and severe and that its issue would depend not merely on the clash of armies and navies, but on the belligerents' power of economic endurance. The work gradually assumed considerable importance and, in the hands of Mr. (now Sir William) Max Muller who took it over when I had to go abroad at the beginning of 1915, and carried it on until the end of the War, these monthly reports became increasingly valuable contributions to the information which reached the Government from other quarters as to the general situation in enemy countries.

In June, 1915, the Foreign Office asked me to undertake another and far more arduous task. The political situation in the Balkan States which had so far remained neutral, viz. Greece, Bulgaria and Rumania, was causing increased anxiety since the failure of our first great efforts to force the Dardanelles and clear the Turks out of Gallipoli, as the successful prosecution of our operations against Turkey was clearly seen to need something more than their mere neutrality, which, in the case of Bulgaria at least, was subject to grave suspicion in view of her bitter hostility to Serbia since the second Balkan War. Rumania alone was already conditionally pledged to us. In Greece dynastic influences were believed to be the strongest obstacle in the way of her active co-operation with us, Queen Sophia being a sister of William II.

Even if the Bulgarian King Ferdinand was not already so deeply committed to the German side as some people already – and rightly – suspected, the diplomatic deadlock in South-Eastern Europe threatened to be as persistent as the military deadlock in the Western battlefields. It was in these circumstances that, as I was known to have been long acquainted with the Near East, I was asked to go out on a semi-official mission and try to pick up the tangled threads of Allied diplomacy, and, in short, to 'get a move on.' The tide had already set so heavily against us that I was certainly not at all sanguine of success, but I undertook to do what I could, and my final instructions gave me a very free hand. Mr. J. D. Gregory (now Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), who was then attached to the British mission to the Vatican, joined me in Rome as my secretary, and his help was invaluable, for he was a splendid worker and a most cheerful and resourceful travelling companion.

I reached Athens on July 4. There I found an even worse state of affairs than I had anticipated. It was my first experience of a neutral capital during the War, for when I passed through Rome Italy had already joined the Allies. Athens was divided into two camps – the German camp and that of the Allies – and the German camp was at least far the more conspicuous. It had the Court behind it and most of the society that wished to be thought 'fashionable.' The German and Austrian Legations were the headquarters of a raging and tearing and very costly propaganda, which the representatives of the Allied Powers were unable or unwilling to emulate. The Germans evidently controlled a very large, though not the most reputable, part of the Athenian Press, and whereas the German and Austrian military attachés were kept supplied with abundant information as to the military situation both on the Western and the Russian front, which they used very effectively to sway Greek opinion, hardly any attempt was made to keep our people informed from British headquarters at home or in France, or even in Gallipoli. The

Germans had a veritable army of spies in their employ, and I had much more than a suspicion that from the very day of my arrival all my movements were being closely watched. On the other hand, popular sympathies throughout the country were still strongly with the Western Powers, and, though M. Venizelos, the one outstanding personality in the Balkan Peninsula whose faith in the Allied cause never wavered in the darkest hours, was out of office, the recent general elections foreshadowed his early return to power. As soon as Turkey joined the Central Empires he had sought, though unsuccessfully, to reconstitute the Balkan League against her. He had afterwards offered to join the Allies and mobilize the Greek army against the Turks on conditions which the Allied Governments rejected because he required a guarantee for Greece against the consequences of hostile intervention on the part of Bulgaria, and when later on he had proposed to cede Kavalla to Bulgaria as the price of active co-operation between her and Greece, King Constantine had queered his pitch, and he and his colleagues were constrained to resign and make room for a new government much less friendly to the Allies. The Prime Minister, M. Gounaris, continued, it is true, to express readiness to negotiate with the Allies for Greece's eventual entry into the war, and in his conversation with me, he professed his great regret that the Allies had not reciprocated his good-will. But as his and his colleagues' resignation was only delayed by the illness of the King, who was still in a dangerous condition, no immediate decision could be expected. In any case, the Greek decision would depend ultimately on the military situation of the Allies, and above all at Gallipoli. With regard to the latter, nothing I had heard in London and least of all the tone of my instructions from the Foreign Office had prepared me for the alarming view taken at Athens in the best informed quarters and by our warmest friends. I already knew, of course, how disastrous had been the long delay and the divided counsels at home which had given the Turks nearly three months to bring

up picked troops and organize their defences. For General (now Field-Marshal Sir William) Birdwood, whom I had missed by a couple of days in Cairo on his way with Sir Ian Hamilton to Gallipoli, had left me word that the operations which would have been relatively easy when he was sent to reconnoitre the position in January and found the peninsula practically undefended, might now prove little short of a forlorn hope. I knew how completely our naval attack on the Dardanelles had failed, as indeed had the Greek Admiralty, which had naturally been making a special study of the problem for years past, would have told us it must, had it been consulted – but it never was. I knew at what an appalling cost our troops had at last secured a precarious foothold on a very few points of the peninsula Suvla Bay, and that it was more than doubtful whether the reinforcements then being hurried out from home, still only half trained and inadequately equipped, would be able to turn the scales in our favour against the strong reinforcements which the Turks were pouring in from Asia Minor. But what no one had ever suggested to me before I got to Athens was the desperate plight in which our expeditionary force would ultimately find itself unless a decision were reached before the weather broke in the late autumn and the storms that at that season often hold up for days and even weeks together all communication by sea, began to threaten the very existence of an army absolutely dependent on the regular and undisturbed flow of provisions and munitions of all sorts, and even of drinking-water, from our base on the islands. So long, too, as the only slender strips of the coast to which we clung were constantly exposed to the enemy's fire, no provision could be made for any adequate accumulation of stores nor any works undertaken to facilitate their landing in rough weather. A moment might therefore arrive when, failing a decisive victory in the peninsula or the intervention of one of the Balkan States to effect a diversion in our favour by operating against the Turks between Gallipoli and Constantinople, we should be

confronted with the two disastrous alternatives of withdrawal at a heavy cost, political as well as military, or of exposing our army to the most frightful hardships if not to actual starvation by the interruption for more or less prolonged periods of its essential communications with our bases in the Ægean islands. To have even to contemplate such an appalling eventuality appeared at the same time to place a time limit on my own mission such as no one in London had hinted at, since in addition to all the other grounds on which the intervention of one of the neutral states of the Balkans against Turkey was of manifest importance, there was the extreme urgency of procuring immediate relief from the hazards of a most dangerous, and eventually perhaps desperate, situation in Gallipoli. Yet owing to the prevailing confusion and the absence of any organized liaison between our diplomatists and our soldiers, I was unable to discover whether such contingencies had ever been definitely placed before the Cabinet, and I decided that before leaving Athens I ought at least to place them quite clearly before Sir Edward Grey. What the results of my telegram were to be, I did not know till I got back to Athens six weeks later.

On the voyage from Athens to Salonika an incident occurred which illustrated the political difficulties which so often arose during the War out of the exercise of the right of search for contraband of war in neutral bottoms. I was travelling in a Greek mail steamer, the *Atramitos*, and some seventy miles south of Salonika she was stopped by H.M.S. *Folkestone* and boarded by one of her officers who discovered from the manifest that the cargo comprised some packages of a substance used for preparing leather which we had declared to be contraband. The captain of the *Folkestone* at once sent a prize crew on board to take the *Atramitos* back to Mudros, our naval headquarters in the Ægean, for further examination. As soon as I represented to him that I was travelling on a Government mission, he kindly sent a wireless message to the naval Commander-in-Chief, who allowed him to tranship me with

Gregory to the *Folkestone*, and he undertook to land me the following morning at Salonika. But the other very numerous Greek passengers hotly resented the delay of probably three or four days which the action of the British naval authority involved, and amongst them there was the General in command of the Greek army in Macedonia and several of his officers, and other Greek Government officials, as well as many women and children. British naval officers could only carry out the instructions issued to them, but I felt that those who issued them did not at all realize the intense friction produced in a neutral country, whose good-will we had every reason to desire, by such drastic interference with the only regular means of communication available at that time between the old and the new provinces of the Hellenic kingdom.

The *Folkestone* was an old cross-Channel passenger steamer transformed and armed for special service, and she bore many honourable scars testifying to the War work she had done at the mouth of the Dardanelles. The captain had a number of interesting yarns to spin before I could try to get the few hours' sleep which he kindly insisted I should have in his own cabin whilst his ship was bearing us towards Salonika. It was little more than the dawn of day when we climbed down into his skiff which deposited us and our kit on the quay, still so completely deserted that not a soul took any notice of our landing. I had decided to proceed as quickly as possible to Sofia, which was clearly, as far as diplomatic operations were concerned, the key position in the Balkans. The long day's journey – one of the hottest of summer days – all up the valley of the Vardar, brought home to me very forcibly the dire results which would attend a conflict between Serbia and Bulgaria, as that railway was practically the only line of communication left for us between Western and Eastern Europe by way of the Mediterranean, and the only line by which we could send ammunition and supplies to our Serbian allies and to the Rumanians, should they join us. It had already been imperilled by the raids of Bulgarian *Komitajis*

at critical moments for Serbia during her gallant struggle with Austria, and it was only when I reached Nish, the temporary capital since Belgrade had been captured by the Austrians immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, that I realized the terrible plight to which she was already reduced. A sharp attack of dysentery compelled me to go into hospital for a few days, and war and disease, especially typhus, had taken such a heavy toll of Serbian doctors and medical stores and equipment that the only hospital in which I could be treated was a Russian military ambulance established pending its despatch to the front in a few wooden huts outside the town. The heat under the corrugated iron roofs rose every day to well over 100 degrees, but the skill and care with which I was treated by the staff, and especially by the masterful lady doctor from Moscow who was in supreme charge and held the military rank of colonel, were so successful that I was very quickly discharged with a fairly clean bill of health. I could not have been in better hands, nor, as I subsequently discovered, in much better quarters. For what with the enormous influx from Belgrade and from other parts of the country into a small provincial town, and the very scanty resources to which every one was reduced, including foreign diplomats and the Serbian Ministers themselves, life in Nish was very hard for every one. The British Minister, Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Des Graz, had three rooms, one of which did duty as chancery, in a small mosquito-ridden house, and M. Paschitch, the veteran Prime Minister, camped with most of his officials in what had been the Prefecture. But every one's spirits were still high, and, Serbia being a belligerent, there was no trace of those enemy influences which pervaded the atmosphere at Athens. The Serbians were, as they might well be, intensely proud of the way in which they had repelled single-handed the first onslaughts of the Austrian armies. But they were, I promptly found, desperately suspicious of Bulgaria and loth to make any of the concessions to her which the Allies esteemed essential

to secure her co-operation or at any rate the maintenance of her neutrality. The Pact of London, which had brought Italy into the War, had given the Serbians more alarm than comfort, for the Italian Government having insisted that it should be kept absolutely secret, the Serbians inferred, not without reason, that some of its terms affected their interests and affected them very unfavourably. The few conversations I had with the Serbian 'Grand Old Man' and some of his colleagues before I went on to Sofia, were no more encouraging than the situation I found on arrival at Sofia.

It resembled that which I had found at Athens, but it was worse still. Few people doubted that from the very beginning King Ferdinand had committed himself very deeply to Germany, and some already suspected that he was bound hand and foot to her. Most of his Ministers were known to have pro-German sympathies, though when Radoslavoff, whom I had known in olden days, received me, he professed merely to be convinced as a Bulgarian patriot that the interests of his country could best be served by the maintenance of its neutrality. There was, however, scarcely a semblance of neutrality in the scornful tone in which he inquired whether there was anything in the military situation, either in the West or in the East, to encourage Bulgaria to cast in her lot with the Allies. As in Greece, there was a good deal of evidence that the Bulgarian people were themselves by no means unfriendly to the Allies, and several of the more liberal political leaders were ready to assure me that the Allies might still hope for Bulgarian co-operation in spite of King Ferdinand, and even against him, if they would only compel Serbia to give way at once and effectively to Bulgaria's 'righteous' demands for a revision of the Treaty of Bukarest imposed upon her at the end of the second Balkan War and cede to her immediately her rightful share of Macedonian territory along the Vardar. For that was the crux. It was the humiliation of Bulgaria in the Treaty of Bukarest of 1913 that still rankled with every Bulgarian, even when his sympathies were entirely

with the Allies. Yet the Allies had seldom made any considered attempt to deal with that issue, and when they had, they had only done so half-heartedly and after such protracted negotiations backwards and forwards between the Allied Cabinets that by the time they had agreed to formulate their proposals, they had lost, through the worsening of the military situation, whatever attraction they might originally have possessed for the Bulgarians. At Sofia even more than at Athens, the diplomatic efforts of the Allied Powers had been disastrously handicapped by lack of co-ordination. The Allies never pulled their weight because they never tried to pull it all together at the same time and in the same place. They knocked successively at different doors, and each had his own views as to the price that should be paid for the desired co-operation of this or that neutral State. None of the British representatives in the Balkan States realized more fully the failure of Allied diplomacy and the causes of its failure than Mr. H. J. O'Beirne, who had been sent from Petrograd about a fortnight before my arrival in Sofia to take charge of the British Legation. Drowned just a year later with Lord Kitchener on his ill-fated mission to Russia, O'Beirne was amongst the ablest and most promising of our younger diplomatists, and having been Councillor of Embassy in one of the great Allied capitals, he brought to Sofia a much clearer appreciation of the general political and military situation than could in the circumstances be possessed by anyone whose narrower purview had been confined to the Balkan States. At an earlier stage he might have succeeded in rallying the popular elements in Bulgaria that still inclined towards co-operation with the Allies. Dr. Vladoff, a leading member of the Agrarian party, numerically the strongest Opposition party in the Sobranjé, and the most influential throughout the country, told me that at the end of February, 1915, just before the first bombardment of the Dardanelles, which for a moment made a great impression throughout the Balkan Peninsula, he had pleaded very strongly that the

Allied Governments should strike whilst the iron was hot. That was the moment for them, and especially for the British Government, to prove to the Bulgarian people that co-operation with them was the surest way to the fulfilment of its national aspirations, and above all in Macedonia. He had felt confident that if the Allies would only come forward then with a clean-cut promise that Bulgarian co-operation against Turkey would be rewarded by the recovery of Macedonia, there would be such an upheaval of public opinion that neither Ferdinand nor his Ministers would be able to withstand it, even if there had not been good reasons for believing, as he did, that the Prime Minister himself might be won over. But unfortunately, Dr. Vladoff went on to tell me, nothing had been done then, and too much had happened to weaken the Allies' position before he was able to reopen the question with his friend, Mr. G. H. Fitzmaurice, whose intimate knowledge of the Balkans and long experience as Oriental secretary in Constantinople were never utilized until, only a few weeks before Mr. O'Beirne's arrival, he was sent out to strengthen the Legation at Sofia.

So much impressed was I with the grave apprehensions entertained by Mr. O'Beirne and his Allied colleagues that I lost no time in telegraphing to the Foreign Office, urging prompt and energetic decisions if Bulgarian co-operation was still to be secured even at the eleventh hour. The time was, indeed, fast approaching when it might no longer be a question of Bulgaria's co-operation with the Allies, or even of her neutrality, but of her active co-operation with the Germanic Powers. The stars in their courses seemed to be fighting against us. Przemysl and Lemberg had been recaptured by the Germans, and against these successes we had none to set off in the other theatres of war. Very ominous, too, was the loan which Bulgaria had already raised in Germany and the negotiations she was conducting with greater secrecy with Turkey for the acquisition of a strip of Turkish territory of considerable importance for her railway communication.

Would Berlin and Constantinople have displayed such practical good-will towards Bulgaria, had they not felt satisfied that they could pull the strings that mattered most in Sofia? In Bulgaria as in Greece, German propaganda was intensely active and had large funds at its disposal, whilst the German and Austrian military attachés, who alone had the ear not only of the King but of the Bulgarian War Office, were kept fully supplied with military information which it was easy for them in the circumstances to turn to excellent account, whilst until the arrival of Mr. Fitzmaurice, little or nothing had been done to counter the German propaganda, and in the matter of military information the Allied representatives were left almost entirely to glean what they could from public sources, and what they could glean was profoundly discouraging.

How watertight were the compartments in which Allied diplomacy and military authorities were respectively confined I discovered nowhere quite so clearly as at Kragujevatz, the headquarters of the Serbian Prince Regent and of his army. The Serbian army had been resting and refitting for several months after the strain of the first campaign in which it had beaten off the great onslaught of the Austrian armies. Allied diplomacy was beginning to be somewhat perplexed and perturbed at the Serbian army's prolonged inactivity. In consequence of despatches I had sent home from Nish, I received instructions whilst I was in Sofia to go to Kragujevatz and ask for an audience from the Prince Regent. Amongst other things, I learnt there that Serbia's military inactivity was mainly due to the advice which Kitchener had given through other channels at Serbian army headquarters. He was always secretive, or as his friends put it, he kept his own counsel. The advice which he had given was that the Serbian army should hold itself in reserve till the time came for it to play a decisive part in a great strategic scheme which he had in contemplation if and when we captured Gallipoli and occupied Constantinople. What he proposed, as I learnt also later on

at Bukarest, was a great sweep of the combined forces of the Allies, including those of Rumania and of Greece, who would then *ex hypothesi* have joined us, right up the valley of the Danube to take the Austro-Hungarian armies in the rear. The very optimistic assumption on which Kitchener's scheme purported to be based was ill-calculated to prepare the Prince Regent or his staff for the arguments I was to put before them in support of far-reaching concessions to Bulgaria in order to meet the dire necessities of the military situation at Gallipoli.

The Prince Regent's position was a singularly difficult one. His father, King Peter, who was too old and infirm to take part in the military operations or even to conduct public affairs during such a critical time, had great personal authority in the country, and he had not even delegated the whole of his powers to Prince Alexander, whilst the Regent's elder brother, Prince George, had largely atoned by his reckless gallantry in the field for the youthful vagaries which had constrained him to abdicate a few years previously his right to the succession. There were also other dynastic considerations. The old Obrenovitch dynasty no longer had many friends in the country, but the echo of the old family feuds and of the sanguinary revolution which had restored the Kara Georgevitch dynasty and King Peter in 1903 had not altogether died away. Nevertheless, the Prince Regent, who received me with great friendliness, and began by thanking me very warmly for the part I had played in launching a Serbian relief fund in London in the preceding autumn, listened to me attentively whilst I explained to him as far as I could prudently do so the difficult military situation in which the Allies found themselves, and more especially in regard to the position of the British Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli. I assured him that nothing could be more unwelcome to the British Government, or to me personally, than to have to urge the necessity of fresh sacrifices upon the Serbian people, whose astonishing achievements in the field had won the

admiration and gratitude of the Allied Powers. But the War was imposing immense sacrifices on all the Allies, and there was no need for me, I added, to point out that when victory finally crowned their efforts, as none doubted it would, Serbia's reward would assuredly not be incommensurate, for it would mean the fulfilment of all her national aspirations over a much wider area than the small strip of Macedonia which would secure the neutrality and perhaps even the active co-operation of Bulgaria. I reminded him also that the sacrifice of the 'uncontested zone,' as it was then described, would after all be merely the same sacrifice which Serbia had herself been ready to make three years earlier when she agreed to cede it to Bulgaria under the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, when the Balkan League was formed against Turkey. The Prince replied by asking me whether in this respect the situation had not been profoundly modified by the Pact of London and the encouragement it had given to Italy's ambition to convert the Adriatic into an Italian lake. Italy would surely not have insisted on withholding from Serbia the precise terms of the Pact were they not incompatible with the 'wide access to the Adriatic' promised to Serbia, who could less than ever in such circumstances consent to place the Bulgarians astride of her one line of communication with the Ægean down the Vardar Valley. If Italy were inspired by the same generous purpose as her Allies she should at least take her fingers off Albania, which could never exist as a really independent State, and allow Serbia to come down to Durazzo and find in that direction an opportunity of expansion to the Adriatic which would offer some compensation for the loss of Macedonia and the interposition of a fresh barrier between Serbian territory and the sea. Rumania also, he understood, was claiming in return for her co-operation the promise of the whole Austrian Banat in the ultimate peace settlement, though Serbia had indefeasible rights to part of it. His whole people were under arms, and grateful as they were for the universal and generous recognition which their successful

resistance to Austrian aggression had hitherto elicited, how could he make them understand all of a sudden at this stage the necessity of sacrificing part of the national patrimony which they themselves had wrested only two years before at very heavy cost from the treacherous foe to whom they were now asked to surrender it? Their political judgment was still too immature to grasp the complexity of international problems, and as to the exigencies of the actual military situation, which he wished me to discuss with his Chief of the General Staff, Colonel Pavlovitch, it was obviously not desirable to have them preached from the housetops. As to other considerations of internal policy which were bound to weigh with him, he merely hinted, and in the form almost of a personal appeal to the Allied Powers, that they should take into account the difficulties of his position as a youthful and inexperienced ruler in a primitive country which was perhaps more democratic than any other in Europe.

I was, I confess, deeply moved by the pathos of the Prince's appeal. But the Chief of the General Staff showed himself still more uncompromising in the conversation I had with him afterwards at the Prince's desire. He expatiated at much greater length on the strategic aspect of the Macedonian issue and of Italian policy as he believed the Pact of London to have disclosed it, both as they affected the immediate situation and as to the future of Serbia. Colonel Pavlovitch, an old soldier who was not inclined to mince his words, dismissed every political argument with almost undisguised contempt and told me flatly that 'this question of Macedonia is a military question and can only be settled by military men and on military grounds.'

When I returned to Sofia the representatives of the Allied Powers had made to the Bulgarian Government the Declaration of August 3, which was their last word in regard to the Macedonian issue, and I felt more than ever doubtful whether, even if it proved acceptable to Bulgaria, Serbia could be induced to agree. I had anyhow brought back from Kragu-

jevatz the conviction that the only hope lay in overcoming the opposition of Prince Regent's military advisers, and with O'Beirne's full concurrence and support I telegraphed home suggesting that an officer of rank and experience, and for preference with a personal knowledge of the situation at Gallipoli, should be sent at once on a special mission to confer with Serbian headquarters. I then proceeded to Bukarest, accompanied on the train, as I soon perceived during the journey, by a German agent who had been employed to watch me all the time I was in Bulgaria. When I reached Bukarest the first thing to greet me was a newspaper poster at the station announcing in huge letters 'The Fall of Warsaw' – an announcement peculiarly unpleasant for one whose business it was to persuade the Rumanians to come into the War without a day's further delay. Moreover, and quite as much as elsewhere, I found how woeful had been the want of cohesion and fluctuating purpose of the Allies' diplomatic campaign in Rumania. The lead had unwisely been left to Russia in view of her preponderating influence in Eastern Europe, and it was the exorbitant pretensions she had from the very first put forward that had, more than anything else, held Rumania back during the earlier stages of the War. It was, on the other hand, upon co-operation with the Russian forces that all the plans prepared by the Rumanian headquarters staff in the event of war had been originally based. How could Rumania be expected to take the final plunge at the very moment when the fall of Warsaw had afforded such striking evidence of Russian military collapse? Russia had been indeed persuaded to abate something of her pretensions since the fortunes of war had turned so disastrously against her, but she still talked at Bukarest as if it was for her to impose her own terms upon Rumania.

Another consideration, too, I found present to the Rumanian mind, which was not altogether new to me, as I had heard it mentioned in Athens and in Sofia, but never so strongly pressed upon me as at Bukarest. That was the fate of Con-

stantinople at the end of the War. It was known that the Western Powers had undertaken to raise no objections to the transfer of Constantinople to Russia. For Rumania the freedom of the Straits was of far greater importance than to any of the other Balkan States, inasmuch as through them lay her only maritime right of way to Western Europe, and what guarantee could she have that Russia in possession of Constantinople could be trusted to respect it? The closing of the Straits through Turkey's entry into the War had brought that problem straight home to Rumania as she was then for the second season in succession unable to export a splendid harvest from her great alluvial plains to her chief markets in Western Europe. The Russian demands since the beginning of the War had revived all the old distrust which had sprung up when Russia rewarded her co-operation in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 by taking Bessarabia away from her. Even Italy's recent entry into the War had not had the effect on Rumania which had been at first anticipated. For whilst before that event there had been negotiations between Rome and Bukarest for the simultaneous intervention of the two Latin Powers, Italy had failed to keep Rumania informed as to the course of her own negotiations with the Allies, and had finally come in without vouchsafing any further information to the Rumanian Government, which had been kept as much in the dark as Serbia with regard to the Pact of London. As to the military situation, the Rumanian Government was only too painfully aware that the Rumanian army, deprived for the present of all hope of support from the Russians, would be exposed to grave disaster if it took the field at once. The mere signature of the Convention still awaiting completion for Rumania's co-operation with the Allies, might very well provoke Germany to divert some of her armies on the Russian front for an immediate onslaught on Rumania whilst Russia was still paralysed by her recent losses. Nor, as one Rumanian Minister frankly told me, was it at all certain that a calculated indiscretion on the part of Russia would not precipitate such

a contingency in order to secure temporary relief for the Russian armies at however dire a cost to Rumania. If Germany wanted a *casus belli* with Rumania, it would be easy enough for her to pick a quarrel on the question of the transport of war supplies from Central Europe to Turkey through Rumania, which had already given rise to acrimonious controversies between Berlin and Bukarest.

It was therefore no surprise to me that in such circumstances the Rumanian Government was not inclined to pay much attention even to the danger of a rupture between Serbia and Bulgaria, though the maintenance of Bulgarian neutrality was essential to the preservation of Rumania's one line of communication with Western Europe. But it was a surprise to me to find how very imperfectly the representatives of the Allied Powers themselves had been kept informed as to the action contemplated or taken in the matter at Nish and at Sofia. On these points I was able to give them a great deal of information which had never reached them from their own Governments, and I induced the Prime Minister, M. Bratiano, whose father I had known well in former time, to issue instructions to the Rumanian representatives at Nish and at Sofia to give their support to the policy by which the Allies still hoped to compose the Serbo-Bulgarian differences. German propaganda I found to be as active at Bukarest as in other neutral capitals, and just then, not unnaturally, in an extremely aggressive and triumphant mood. No sooner had I arrived than the proprietor of my hotel, who was a staunch friend of the Allies, though the Germans were his most lucrative patrons, impressed upon me the importance of keeping no confidential papers in my room, but of taking them at once for safe custody to the British Legation, as he could not guarantee the trustworthiness of his staff against the machinations of German secret agents.

It had been bad enough to be met at Bukarest with the news of the fall of Warsaw, for Rumanian opinion was naturally more sensitive to what was happening on the Eastern

Front than on any other. But still worse news was in store for me on my return to Sofia. For there I learnt the disastrous failure of our last great offensive at Gallipoli – the attack on the Anaferta Heights from Suvla Bay with the new reinforcements just out from England, which had for a moment promised a decisive victory and had then in the miserable confusion of long delays been turned into a defeat which there was no prospect of retrieving. The Germans in Sofia, being in close touch with Turkish headquarters, had, as usual, fuller information than our people had received, and it had been grist to their mill. They had made the fullest use of it, and whatever chance there might have been of Bulgaria being satisfied with the Allied Declaration of August 3, had it been followed up by news of the opening of the Dardanelles to the British Fleet, was extinguished as soon as it was clear that the Turks had foiled our greatest effort and that Constantinople was safe at least for many a long day.

There was no sudden change in the attitude of the Bulgarian Government, but its tone hardened. Neither Nish nor Athens showed, on the other hand, any signs of relaxing their resistance to the compromise proposed by the Allies, though events at Gallipoli made it all the more imperative. One of the arguments put forward by the Bulgarian Government was that Bulgaria could not afford to wait as the Allies suggested till the end of the War for possession of the territories of which we held out a promise to her. Before going to Bukarest I had already suggested that that demand might be met by inducing Serbia to cede those territories, not, indeed, directly to Bulgaria, but to the Allies on the analogy of the Austrian cession of Venice to Napoleon III, and not directly to Italy, in 1859, and sending up a small Allied force to occupy them in trust for Bulgaria until the War was ended. I pressed this again upon Sir Edward Grey, but things had already moved too fast and too far. There was nothing more for me to do at Sofia. King Ferdinand, of whom I had requested an audience when I first arrived in Sofia in the middle of July,

expressed once more his obviously disingenuous regret that his time was too much occupied for him 'to have the pleasure' of renewing his acquaintance with me. The pretext on this occasion was that he was going to spend the next few days in the country. The Prime Minister showed an equally marked disinclination to have any further conversation with me, for though he made two appointments with me, he failed to keep them without even the courtesy of an excuse. I had therefore to leave poor O'Beirne much more depressed than I had at first found him, but not a whit less determined to fight to the last against increasingly heavy odds.

The only thing I could do was to try once more to overcome the stubborn resistance to the Allies' policy at Nish. The military authorities there, I heard, though I did not again visit army headquarters, were as uncompromising as ever, and public opinion, which had always held the concessions demanded from Serbia to be cruelly unfair to her, professed now to be convinced that they would in any case be futile and that nothing would slake Bulgaria's thirst, not for mere territory but for revenge for the last Balkan War. Paschitch almost alone was more reasonable. He began indeed by expressing to me with some bitterness his regret that the Allied Powers in drafting the Declaration of August 3 had not sought at least to clothe it in a form less unpalatable to Serbia's national sentiment. 'Apart from the substance,' he said, 'why should you talk to us who are your allies in a more abrupt tone than you employ towards Bulgaria who, even as a neutral, has never been friendly to you? Why convey by a specific reference to the Treaty of 1912 the impression that your main object is to upset the Treaty of Bukarest of 1913? We know that all you are really thinking about is the co-operation of the Bulgarian army against Turkey, but you might surely remember that we are a small people, but proud and perhaps unduly sensitive. Why not handle us a little more tenderly, especially when you are asking us to do something which is so cruelly hard? I shall have to tell at least the

leaders of our Parliament how matters stand, and you have certainly not made things easy for me.' He then, however, went on to admit that, although the somewhat vague assurances which the Italian Government had at last been induced to give with regard to the Pact of London had by no means removed his apprehensions as to Italian ambitions in the Adriatic, Serbia would not be justified in shrinking from heavy sacrifices if a settlement of the Macedonian issue could bring Bulgaria over to the Allies and thereby hasten a successful conclusion of the War. On one point, however, he laid more stress than ever, viz. Serbia's engagements towards Greece. He regarded the alliance between Greece and Serbia as the one permanent guarantee against Bulgarian ambition, which, he repeated, even the 'uncontested zone' would only temporarily satisfy, and it was impossible for him to imperil it, nor would it be to the interest of the Allies that he should. This conversation confirmed at least partially the view taken by all the Allied representatives, except the Italian Minister, that the opposition of the Serbian Government might still be overcome. But what about the opposition of Kragujevatz? The Allied sovereigns and the President of the French Republic had already sent messages to old King Peter which struck a happier note than the Declaration handed in by their diplomatic representatives on the same day as the Allied Declaration at Sofia. But they had made no great impression upon the Prince Regent's military advisers. There was still, however, one step that might, I thought, carry even greater weight, and as our Ambassador in Petrograd, Sir George Buchanan, was an old friend of mine, I felt free to make one suggestion to him privately as well as in a telegram to our Foreign Office. A special and solemn appeal from the Emperor of Russia, who, apart from all the more ancient and intimate traditions of Russian friendship with Serbia, was in a position to remind her that twelve months ago on the eve of the Austrian Declaration of War she had placed her destinies unreservedly in his hands, might still be more effective than a

round robin, however august, which to suit all the signatories had to be brought down to a more commonplace level. But the word which might have been the saving word never came from Petrograd. The Russian Government was willing enough to bring all the official pressure it could upon Serbia, but not a word came from the Tsar. Yet already there were indications that it would soon be no longer any question even of Bulgarian neutrality, but only as to how soon Bulgaria would openly join hands with the Germanic Empires. Outside official circles, many Serbians were already asking whether, if King Ferdinand was merely waiting for his marching orders from Berlin, it might not be better for Serbia to take the initiative and drive him out of Sofia before the Germans and Austrians had completed their plans for an invasion of Serbia in conjunction with the Bulgarians.

When I returned to Athens a few days later Venizelos had just returned to office, but, as he pointedly replied when I congratulated him, 'not to power.' King Constantine had recovered his health, but was more than ever under the influence of Queen Sophia and of her Imperial brother at Berlin. His personal popularity had been greatly increased by the almost miraculous nature of his recovery. For had not even his German doctors given up all hope when they allowed an ikon of peculiar sanctity from a famous shrine in the Peloponnesus to be taken into the palace, and was it not from the moment when he was raised in bed to kiss the image of the Virgin that he began to mend? He had always been for the Greek people the hero of the Balkan wars. 'He was already,' Venizelos remarked, '*l'enfant de la victoire*, and now he is *l'enfant du miracle*. It would have been hard enough in any case for me to prevail over that unique combination, and now there is the added misfortune of your last failure at Gallipoli.' His own faith in the ultimate triumph of the Allies' cause was still as unshaken as his firm belief that Greece would sooner or later throw in her lot with England. But he intimated to me equally frankly that there was little or no chance of her

immediate intervention. The King had refused to listen in the early spring to his own suggestion that Kavala ought to be ceded to Bulgaria. The reference to its eventual cession in the Declaration which the Allies had made at Athens at the same time as at Sofia and Nish on August 3 had provoked strong language from the King who, strangely enough, had been urged by the Emperor William on no account to yield to Bulgaria on that point, whilst German agents in Sofia were advising King Ferdinand to make it a *sine qua non*! There was as little immediate comfort to be got at Athens as anywhere else in the Balkans, and I was only induced to delay my return home for a few days by a telegram from Sir Ian Hamilton, telling me that as I was unable to accept his invitation to visit him at Mudros, he wished to send Mr. (now Lord) Lloyd, who was serving as an Intelligence Officer on his staff. Mr. Lloyd and I were old friends, and since I had been out he had already sent me one long and very depressing letter, but it had been written before the failure of our last attack from Suvla Bay. His account of it and of the hopeless deadlock in front of us was naturally still more depressing, nor was I able to hold out to him any prospect of relief coming from the Balkans. He fully confirmed all that I had reported home on my first arrival at Athens as to the desperate straits in which our forces in Gallipoli would find themselves as soon as the winter storms threatened their communications across the Ægean sea, but before leaving Athens I had at least the satisfaction of meeting Colonel (now Sir Maurice) Hankey, who had just arrived from England on his way to Mudros for the purpose of reporting on this particular aspect of the situation, and of being told that his mission was in a large measure due to my first report on the subject. It was his report which in turn caused General Munro and after him Kitchener himself, to proceed to Gallipoli, when the decision was at last taken to evacuate the peninsula as the only course left to us in order to avoid a worse disaster.

Meanwhile I returned to London, submitted to the Foreign

Office a full report of my ill-starred mission, and saw Kitchener at the War Office. I found him in a strangely optimistic mood. He told me very amiably that he had seen most of my dispatches, which had been very valuable, though not very pleasant reading. He had himself been for a time rather alarmed at the prospect of a Bulgarian attack upon Serbia, but he was sure King Ferdinand would not move unless he could depend upon a German as well as an Austrian army moving in support of his Bulgars, and, 'with the invasion of Poland, Germany had shot her bolt for the present on the Eastern Front, and Austria had twice burnt her fingers in Serbia.' The winter, too, would soon be coming in the Balkans. So he did not think much would happen there till the spring. Within a fortnight after this sanguine prophecy Bulgaria was openly mobilizing for war, and within less than a month Mackensen had assumed command of the combined German and Austrian and Bulgarian forces for the great sweep which blotted Serbia for more than two years off the map. Only the spirit of her people remained. I have seen since then in Corfu the countless graves of Serbian soldiers who succumbed to sickness and wounds after the French navy had rescued the remnants of the Serbian army from the mainland. But before the end of the Great War there was again a Serbian army in being that played as gallant a part as ever in the Allied advance from Salonika in 1918, which brought Bulgaria to her knees and sent Ferdinand flying ignominiously to Germany for safety.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE – AND AFTER

If in the course of my life a day ever dawned that seemed to bring the promise of a new and better era for a tortured world it was in Paris on the morning of January 18, 1919, when the Peace Conference was to hold its first plenary session. The War which was to end war, the War which had been fought to give freedom to all nations, great and small, the War which was to establish the right of self-determination for all peoples had been at last fought out, and at however terrific a cost to victors and to vanquished, we had won it. The 'enemy' countries – Germany, to whose dreams of world dominion the world conflict was mainly due, Austria-Hungary, who had laid the match to the train by her brutal ultimatum and declaration of war against Serbia, Turkey and Bulgaria, who had come in later as the meaner allies of Germany – had all in turn been compelled to sue for peace, and their rulers, except a phantom Sultan in Constantinople, had had to fly before a rising tide of popular anger and despair. The representatives of the Allied and Associated Powers were to meet for the first time in solemn conference on the anniversary of the day on which forty-eight years earlier the German Empire created by blood and iron had been triumphantly proclaimed in the same Gallerie des Glaces at Versailles where a vanquished Germany was to subscribe a few months later to a dictated Treaty. It was a gathering of the nations such as the world had never seen or dreamed of before. Clemenceau, 'the Tiger,' presided, whose indomitable will-power had carried France through the last fierce stages of a war waged with more devastating violence on her territory than on any other of its far-flung fronts; and on either side of him sat the British Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, who had been for three years a great driving power behind such an effort, military

and naval, industrial and economic, as only the collective resources of the whole British Empire could have made possible, and the enigmatic figure of Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States, whose intervention in the War, late as it had seemed to us to come, had irrevocably sealed the doom of the Germanic Empires. Italy was there who had not only cut herself adrift from her old partners in the Triple Alliance, but had taken the field against them before the first year of the War was over. There too was Japan, the first Asiatic Power to take rank with the great Powers of the Western world. Of the representatives of the minor Powers none enjoyed greater prestige than M. Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, who had been heart and soul with the Allies from the beginning of the War and had at last carried his country into it; and none was more dignified than Feisal, the proud Arab prince in flowing robes who had fought to win back the independence of his people after centuries of vassalage to Turkey. Only one seat was to remain empty. The Russian autocracy that had brought invaluable relief to its Western Allies in the early part of the War, had been swept away in a tempest of internal revolution, and the Soviet Republic had bought peace in 1917 from a still victorious Germany by abject surrender at Brest-Litovsk in order to concentrate its energy on its work of wholesale destruction at home. Nor were any of the 'enemy' countries to be taken into consultation as to the terms of peace to be imposed upon them. The cruel memories of the War, and 'German frightfulness' of which anyone could see for himself the damning evidence in a day's drive from Paris into the 'devastated territories' of Northern France, were too recent for the victors to admit that those who had made no secret of the merciless peace they meant to impose as soon as they had won the War, should be allowed to discuss the conditions to be demanded as atonement for the past and security for the future.

It was, however, to be a day of hopes largely unfulfilled, and

disillusionment soon followed, even during the two months I spent at the Hôtel Majestic, the immense and immensely pretentious caravanserai which had been taken for the British Delegation and its enormous staff, together with the neighbouring Hôtel Astoria reserved on an equally lavish scale for departmental offices – both hotels being by a curious coincidence characteristic legacies of German enterprise in Paris before the War. Only Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour resided apart in a house close by which Lady Michelham had placed at their disposal. After the Congress of Vienna Lord Castlereagh was able to boast that the British Embassy had been the only one whose secrets had never leaked out, and elaborate precautions had now been taken to safeguard no less effectively the secrets of the British Delegation in Paris. With the help of Scotland Yard the Majestic was turned into an All-British fortress, even the large army of domestics down to the last chamber-maid and kitchen-maid having been imported direct from England, and duly authorized visitors were alone and sometimes rather grudgingly admitted past its well-guarded doorway. But there was no Castlereagh in Paris. Discretion is not one of Mr. Lloyd George's virtues, and the conversations that passed at his little private breakfast parties were not always kept 'strictly private and confidential.' Amongst the large staff permanently attached to the Delegation, professional diplomatists were relatively fewer than usual in numbers, and, as soon became apparent, less frequently consulted or listened to, though foremost amongst them was Sir Eyre Crowe, for many years a pillar of strength at the Foreign Office. As an old journalist I was much interested in attending – but merely as 'an observer' – the crowded meetings of British newspaper correspondents summoned from time to time to the Majestic when Mr. Lloyd George, with his friend Lord Riddell, the proprietor of that refined Sunday paper, *The News of the World*, at his elbow, dispensed to them as much information as he thought good for them, and often, especially in answering questions put to him, skated with

great skill over extremely thin ice. But even his adroitness could not always disguise his palpable ignorance of foreign affairs, and, worse still sometimes, his relapses into the fustian of the platform orator which he had discarded during the War.

Within my own modest province the work I was able to do turned out to be disappointingly scanty. It was extremely difficult to maintain any useful contact with the French Press when the orientation of British policy seemed to be constantly shifting, and the questions relating to South-Eastern Europe and Turkey with which I was chiefly concerned were for the most part indefinitely hung up – with results that were only to mature four years later at Lausanne – because some one had told Mr. Lloyd George that the East is never in a hurry and Turkey therefore could wait. But, as I had the advantage of knowing M. Clemenceau well, I could talk to him freely on one of the questions on which there were already considerable divergences of view between France and ourselves. At the beginning of the War, we had, perhaps rather prematurely, recognized the special interests which the French had always claimed to have in Syria, and later on we had too easily left them out of account when we encouraged the Arabs to rise against the Turks by holding out hopes to them that their reward would be complete national independence. The French Foreign Office still laboured under the traditional delusion that Syria was profoundly devoted to France, and it was very suspicious of our relations with Feisal, whom it was inclined to regard as merely a British puppet employed to queer the French pitch. From my own knowledge of Syria I ventured to warn M. Clemenceau that, except amongst the Maronites of the Lebanon, Syrian devotion to France had never been more than skin-deep, and that he might meet with far greater difficulties than he seemed to anticipate in safeguarding French interests, if the Arabs were driven to believe that French policy made light of the promises to which France had herself been a party during the War. He retorted with the facile *tu*

quoque that we might meet with similar difficulties and on similar grounds in Mesopotamia, but he listened quite patiently when I tried to show him that the two cases were not entirely parallel, and that we at least approached the problem in a different spirit. It was far less easy to answer him when he asked me whether Zionism, to which we were, I knew, pledged to the hilt, was not still more incompatible with the national aspirations we had done so much to foster amongst the Arabs. The general impression I nevertheless formed was that he was not personally very keen about the Syrian question, except in so far as it tended to create differences of opinion between the French and the British Governments, just when they were unfortunately beginning to drift apart on far more vital issues affecting the future security of France which was his one overwhelming preoccupation. 'If only,' he once abruptly exclaimed, 'there were a few more Englishmen now in Paris who had seen the *Boches* march in here as you and I did in 1871. But,' turning then almost fiercely upon me, 'you are like the rest, and the only thing you want to talk about is Syria,' and he clutched at his black skull cap and flung it on to the table. It was a gesture with which I was not unfamiliar and I took it as a hint to go. '*Mais sans rancune, n'est ce pas?*' he added, and gripped me warmly by the hand, and I knew what had been in his mind; for in me too the War had reawakened all the old memories of the *année terrible* and of my boyhood in France when I had assured my examiners at the Sorbonne that France was *ma seconde patrie.*

As a social centre, the Majestic was always interesting. One met or saw there nearly all the most conspicuous figures of the day. Even Marshal Foch, the most retiring of them all, occasionally dined there as a guest, very quiet and serious, as indeed were most of the great soldiers who had seen war at desperately close quarters. Only Sir Henry Wilson's Irish sense of humour would sometimes break out in boisterous fun, as when, having been asked who had really won the War, he

replied that it was 'for sure' the Portuguese, for had they not been the lure that had induced the Germans to relax their great push on Amiens and seek a more vulnerable point further North which they found all right in the weak Portuguese line, but to their own ultimate undoing. The fair sex was also well represented, and none commanded more attention than my dear friend Gertrude Bell, fresh from Baghdad, though her irreproachable frocks never betrayed the adventurous explorer who had crossed the Arabian peninsula just before the War, and had an even wider knowledge of the desert and its people, though of a different order, than Colonel Lawrence himself, the extraordinary young soldier with the face of a boy and the eyes of a dreamer who had accomplished the incredible task of raising and leading to victory over the Turks a large army of Beduin nomads hastily broken in to some at least of the modern methods of warfare. Every day there was a constant coming and going of experts specially summoned from England, of legislators and jurists, of admirals, generals and air marshals, of bankers and economists, of captains of industry and commerce, of all the best brains in fact which the country could muster in every department of our national life, to advise on all the complex issues involved in the making of peace ever more than in the waging of war.

The Americans had their headquarters on much the same lines at the Hôtel Crillon, where President Wilson worked, it was said, in a watertight compartment of his own to which few even of the American Delegation had access. Almost every nation, represented at the Peace Conference whether great or small, had its own detached stronghold – none perhaps more detached than the Chinese, which was far away on the left bank of the Seine, with a smart Republican Delegation, extremely modern and up-to-date, and as far as the poles asunder from the old Mandarins of the Peking Board of Foreign Affairs who had condescended to receive me at the Tsungli Yamen in 1895. Whilst the French were, of course, at home in Paris, and the Peace Conference held its official

sittings at the Quai d'Orsay, this general system of segregation, though it did not preclude friendly and even intimate relations – especially between the Majestic and the Crillon – almost inevitably tended to promote the atmosphere of suspicion which soon began to brood over the slow moving Conference. There was no dominating personality to play the part of Bismarck at the Berlin Congress of 1878 and steer it firmly on its immensely difficult course. The Wilson Lloyd-George Clemenceau trinity on the bridge were divided from the very first by profound differences of temperament and purpose. The Frenchman, haunted by the vision of the 'devastated territories,' and the destruction deliberately and wantonly wrought by the Germans up to the moment when they were at last driven out of them, was chiefly bent on making France once and for all safe. The British Prime Minister, who had swept the country with the promise to search Germany's pockets, had to juggle with inconvenient facts and figures to see how he could redeem that particular pledge and swell our reparation claims by stretching them to include even pensions. The President of the United States was largely absorbed in squaring some of the terms of the peace treaties with his own famous '14 Points.' That they should have ever brought the ship into port, though after many buffetings and rather heavily waterlogged, was no mean achievement.

Eight years have passed since then, and on many of the results of all that feverish activity one can hardly look back to-day with unalloyed pride or satisfaction. But one new beacon of hope the Peace Conference at least set before the world. The League of Nations may yet mark a great turning-point in the history of mankind. When the Covenant of the League was placed at the head of the Versailles Treaty, it certainly looked a very frail structure, far more frail than the elaborate peace treaties drafted in closer conformity to international precedent. But it has worn better than most of them, though it sustained a severe blow when soon after its birth

it was repudiated by the United States who had first stood sponsor to it, and it still has an irreconcilable enemy in Soviet Russia with its implacable creed of 'world revolution.' Its growth was indeed more often imperilled by enthusiasts, who imagined it could at once inaugurate the millennium and were ready to risk prematurely straining its authority to or beyond the breaking-point than by the doubters who derided it as a mere Utopia. To critics of both categories its actual record is a sufficient reply. It has created the spirit and even provides the agency needed for correcting or attenuating many of the mistakes which can now be clearly traced back to the survival of the War mentality during the Peace Conference and to the phantastic vision of inexhaustible wealth that had been conjured up by the miraculous financing of the War for over four years on a scale of magnitude and extravagance which, according to the economic pundits of 1914, not a country could by any possibility endure for more than six months. It has assisted and controlled the flow of international charity and enabled large public loans to be raised for the relief of the smaller nations, whether 'enemy' or Allied, that had been left almost hopelessly crippled by the War. The mandatory system created by it embodies and applies the doctrine of trusteeship in the governance of subject races on a different or lower plane of social evolution which Burke had for the first time proclaimed a century and a half ago for the guidance of British rulers in India. Its international labour conferences have promoted more humane legislation in many countries, and especially in regard to female and child labour, while it has focussed the public conscience on such social evils as the 'white slave' traffic and unrestricted trade in opium and noxious drugs. In the Assembly the voice of all the smaller nations obtains a hearing, and the Council is specially constituted to discharge the one invaluable function for which no one possessed sufficient authority, even if the will was there, under the old dispensation. It provides regular opportunities for the Nations to meet together and exchange views

through their appointed representatives on all controversial issues in the field of foreign affairs, and it indeed imposes upon them the obligation to hold such consultations whenever any acute crisis has arisen before resorting to any irrevocable acts of war. As I look back upon all the great wars that have been waged in my time, from the Crimean War very soon after I was born to the World War of 1914, I can see none that would necessarily have broken out just as and when it did had there been the same general recognition of the duty to delay the actual outbreak of hostilities until the contending parties could meet and state their case before such a body as exists to-day in the Council of the League. It is even quite conceivable that the deeper causes which brought on those wars might have been themselves removed before the menace of hostilities became imminent if responsible statesmen had had the obligation and the opportunity which Geneva now periodically offers to discuss their differences and clear away the distrust and fear that often more than anything else envenom those differences. The last chance of averting the Great War was lost when Germany rejected Sir Edward's Grey's proposal for a conference on the European issues raised by Austria Hungary's ultimatum and invasion of Serbia, and one may reasonably hold that the World War might have been averted if instead of having to deal with a proposal emanating from a single Power whose motive she chose to suspect, Germany had already bound herself under such a covenant as the League's to join in a consultation of the Powers; for she could not then have refused without placing on indisputable record her overwhelming responsibility for the War which she now so hotly repudiates.

Never again surely will any War Lord 'in shining armour' boast, as William II did in the first weeks of the War, when his armies seemed to be sweeping irresistibly on to Paris, that it was *ein frischer und fröhlicher Krieg*, 'a bright and cheery war!' The War on which he was so recklessly entering may not have ended war, but it swept away too many royal and

imperial crowns not to have ended war as the *ultima ratio regum*. The question of the future is whether it will steal back into 'a world made safe for democracy' on a new alinement of class-war and racial war. In this country, at any rate, class-war is a strange word to have been imported into its political vocabulary. For it is the negation of democracy as it has hitherto been evolved out of our time-honoured system of representative institutions and responsible government. And where else has democracy grown as I have seen it grow to such full maturity of political power? The Crown no longer exercises even the large personal influence which Queen Victoria wielded until the end of her great reign by length of years and experience. Not only has the House of Lords been stripped of all save a very limited residuum of its restraining powers, but the character of the House of Commons, which to-day alone makes and unmakes governments, has been profoundly changed by successive, and in recent times enormous, extensions of the franchise, which before very long will be expanded into practically universal adult franchise for men and women alike from the age of twenty-one. Some may doubt its wisdom, but can there be a fuller expression of democracy as the British people have always understood it, or can the Government which derives its authority from it approximate more closely to 'government of the people, by the people and for the people'?

Yet even in England where democracy as I was brought up to understand it has known how to win through on lawful lines of constitutional development, new forces are springing up so alien to its whole spirit that they have had to import with the new slogan of class-war a distorted interpretation of democracy as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' which, as Soviet Russia is there to show, means the denial of every form of freedom that democracy has hitherto stood for. 'World revolution' is the avowed corollary and proclaimed purpose of class-war, and however fully one may rely upon the common sense and the sober judgment of the vast majority of our own

people, such a challenge to the civilization on which the whole of our national life has been built up, has a very sinister ring for one who, having seen the Red Flag that blazed over the Paris Commune in 1871, has lived to see it flaunted to-day over a large part of far-away China, where the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' threatens to tear the most solid and conservative people in Asia from all their ancient moorings and plunge them into a welter of anarchy and bloodshed of which none can foretell the end. And to-day, as we are learning to our cost, it is only geographically that China is far away from us. The problem of the relations between the white man and the coloured races all over the world has never before been quite so closely brought home to us or in so dangerous a shape. That problem arose no doubt primarily from the greater dynamic energy of the white man asserting itself, sometimes unwisely and even unworthily, over inferior or at any rate weaker races, but it owes much of its present and increasing complexity to the shrinkage, as it were, of the earth which has steadily contracted under the magic wand of modern science, until time and distance have become almost negligible quantities. Steam and electricity were the great discoveries of the first half of the nineteenth century. But it is within my lifetime that the enormous development of trans-continental railways and ocean navigation, together with oil as a new driving power, and the ubiquitous motor and the telegraph and the telephone, and the amazing wireless and the conquest of the air have brought the ends of the earth together as even Jules Verne never dreamt of in the books which enthralled my childhood. Every new scientific discovery has in turn created fresh material needs, stimulated more intensive industrial production and woven a vast network of modern commerce and finance which now envelops the whole world. How many people are there, however, in this over-populated island of ours that would starve if it could not import its daily bread, who realize how largely we now depend on the produce of distant lands and the labour of the coloured races for many of our

staple articles of food and for the raw materials essential to our industries, for cotton and silk and jute and rubber, for tea and coffee and fruit, for scores of things we consume and use every day; or who ever reflect that millions of coloured men, brown, yellow and black, are toiling all the time to provide them at our command for our home markets, which in many cases they could never even have reached before the invention, for instance, of cold storage? Whilst our material and economic life is more and more closely intertwined every day with that of even the most backward coloured races, inhabiting the remotest parts of the earth, others that possess their own types of civilization – some of them more ancient and more tenacious perhaps than our own – are being continuously stirred by the ferment of the new spiritual and intellectual and political forces which we have ourselves transfused into them, and with an irresistible potency intensified from day to day by the rapidly increasing facilities of intercourse between the white man's world and that of the coloured races. No one can foresee the ultimate working of those forces, for they work in many varying and often conflicting ways as forces both of attraction and repulsion. I have been concerned chiefly with the ways in which they worked before the Great War, and to all of them it has given an incalculable momentum, for its repercussion has been felt all over the world far beyond the range of its immediate impact.

Old age may be prone to exaggerate the significance of the changes upon which it can look back. But it may claim to have also a larger measure of the experience needed to focus them, and it is not only because I am old that I see the world that has emerged from the Great War to be so very different a world from that in which I grew up and lived and worked for most of my years. The Great War was an ordeal such as our civilization had never before passed through. It was a war not merely of organized armies and fleets, but of whole nations straining every nerve in a pitiless struggle for existence; it was

a war in which all the achievements of modern science, applied for the nonce to unprecedented methods of destruction, played no less a part than human fortitude and disciplined endurance; it was a war in which for a time all social differences and distinctions were levelled by death or the peril of death on an endless field of battle by land and by sea; it was a war that sent a great seismic wave rolling round and round the earth. The world that emerged from it was not, alas! 'a world fit for heroes to live in,' but a world rudely awakened to the consciousness, however vague, that there was something fundamentally wrong with a civilization which had borne such an appalling harvest of human suffering and widespread ruin. It is an overwrought and disjointed world in perhaps deeper travail than ever before. There hangs over the future a heavy cloud of crude materialism which shows itself equally in a selfish craze for mere amusement and enjoyment to kill the passing hour, and in a fanatical creed of sheer destruction that would shatter all the foundations of our civilization without the slightest demonstrable capacity to better it. But idealism, too, has been quickened to new life, and is striving to express itself, though sometimes incoherently, in terms which the pre-war world would scarcely have known how to construe. If intolerance and contempt of the past are apt to be carried by the rising generation to excessive lengths in every department of our national life, in art and literature as well as in politics and religion, even these may be regarded as signs of renewed vitality rather than as mere feverish symptoms of decay. The world, as I try to see it, has never been more interesting than it is to-day, nor perhaps more bewildering or more difficult to interpret. We have entered into an age of sharper contrasts and of far more acute tension and conflict than were ever dreamt of in the Mid-Victorian era to which I belong. I shall not see the issue of this pitched battle of material and spiritual energies thrusting and counter-thrusting and striving after some vital adjustment of old and new forces to a fast changing order of things. But hard

as I sometimes find it to justify the faith that is in me amidst the cataclysms and portents which I have lived to see, I have been all my life an optimist and must remain so till the end. If one takes a broad survey of history, the human spirit has been through the ages 'upward tending though weak,' and, with all its weakness, that tendency will, I firmly believe, persist.

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